

# THE MILITANT

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PanAm trial is latest U.S.  
assault on Libya

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A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

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## Interest in books high at fair in Havana

BY CLAUDIO BURGOS  
AND CINDY JAQUITH

HAVANA—"I have to have that book," said Brian García, a 17-year-old student, pointing to a copy of *Habla Malcolm X* (Malcolm X Speaks) exhibited in Pathfinder Press's booth at the 10th Havana International Book Fair. He added that he also wanted to read about the fight against racism in the United States today.

*Talk by Mary Alice Waters and report on meeting in Havana to present donation of 'Haciendo historia' to Association of Combatants of the Cuban Revolution—Pages 8-9*

García's comments are typical of many who have stopped by the booth. The Spanish-language collection of Malcolm X's speeches and interviews is the most sought-after title among the broad range of political books that have drawn visitors to Pathfinder's books and pamphlets.

The Havana International Book Fair opened here February 2. Around 65,000 people attended the first two days, according to the daily bulletin produced by fair organizers. The fair lasts through February 10.

Roberto Fernández Retamar, one of  
**Continued on Page 8**

## Workers at Royal laundry make gains in union fight

BY LISA POTASH  
AND LISA-MARIE ROTTACH

CHICAGO—Workers at Royal Airlines Laundries in Chicago, Los Angeles, Miami, and San Francisco have taken a step bringing them closer to winning their fight for union recognition. Representatives of the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees (UNITE) and Royal met at the end of January, the first meeting after five months of a UNITE organizing drive at these laundries. Royal specializes in cleaning and repackaging linens, blankets, and headphones for the airline industry. Some of its largest customers are United, Continental, Delta, Northwest, Southwest, and TWA airlines.

Royal has now handed UNITE a list of employees at these locations. The list will assist the union in its work of contacting these workers. Royal also agreed to meet again with the union in early February.

The union had organized a number of actions in various cities over the last several months in support of the Royal workers' fight to unionize. Among those union members who have brought solidarity to several such actions are workers at Hart, Schaffner

**Continued on Page 5**

## Unionists in France march for wage hikes

120,000 public sector workers oppose gov't proposal

BY DEREK JEFFERS

PARIS—Five days after 300,000 workers demonstrated throughout France in defense of the right to retire at age 60, another 120,000 workers hit the streets January 30 in dozens of cities as part of their fight for a wage increase from the government of Socialist Party prime minister Lionel Jospin.

Responding to a call by all the union federations, hundreds of thousands of workers walked off their jobs January 28. Some 5.2 million public sector workers, including teachers, hospital workers, municipal workers, postal and telephone employees, among others, are covered by these negotiations. The actions rebuffed the 0.5 percent wage increase proposed by the government for 2000. The unions are demanding that the increase keep pace with the official 1.6 percent inflation rate for last year. Almost half of public workers earn less than 9,650 francs per month and an erosion of their wages would have a severe impact on their standard of living (1 franc=US 14 cents).

Two days after the public workers' actions, transportation workers—in their broadest strike since 1995—virtually shut down public transportation February 1 in Paris, demanding more jobs and wage increases to keep up with inflation, which rose more quickly in 2000 than forecast by the government.

Especially numerous in the 25,000-strong Paris demonstration were contingents of municipal employees and hospital workers. "It's not the pensions that should be lowered, it's wages that should be increased," chanted many demonstrators, referring to the January 25 actions. Other slogans called

for hiring temporary workers, who make up a growing percent of the workforce, on a permanent basis. At one point the march passed in front of a Pizza Hut restaurant where 80 workers have been on strike since

early January demanding an increase in their pay over the minimum wage. They set up a table to reach out to the marchers, with petitions and a bucket that netted contributions  
**Continued on Page 11**

## Working farmers rally in Canada



Around 150 farmers rally at Carlton Place, Ontario, at the farm of Jim McRae and Mervin Hilliard, on January 28. Hard-pressed working farmers from as far away as British Columbia joined caravan for opening of parliament to present their demands for immediate cash relief and longer-term support programs.

## 'Bloody Sunday' action in Derry demands truth

BY CELIA PUGH  
AND ANTONIS PARTASIS

DERRY, Northern Ireland—Pressing for the truth to be told about the 1972 attack by British troops who opened fire on a civil

rights march leaving 14 dead, 12,000 people from across Ireland took to the streets of this city January 28.

Leading off the throng were relatives of the slain civil rights fighters, holding pic-

tures of those gunned down by the occupation forces on Jan. 30, 1972, a day known since as Bloody Sunday. Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness, central leaders of Sinn Féin, the political party leading the struggle for a united and democratic Ireland, participated in the march and rally.

Thousands joined the protest as the march passed by their homes, including many young people born after the event. Thousands more marched behind banners and pipe bands from all over Ireland. Supporters joined from Glasgow in Scotland, other parts of Britain, Europe, and the United States.

The annual Bloody Sunday demonstrations are among the largest mobilizations in the ongoing fight to end decades of British occupation of Northern Ireland and the division of the country imposed by London.

With the advance of the Irish freedom struggle, and pressure from a campaign of mass mobilization to demand justice in the case, the British government under Labour Party prime minister Anthony Blair agreed in 1998 to a new inquiry into the killings. A previous hearing, called the Widgery commission, was part of a government effort to organize a cover-up. It sought to clear the soldiers, officers, and government officials of any wrongdoing, and placed the blame on Irish freedom fighters for the murderous assault.

The commission hearings, headed by British judge Lord Saville, began last No-  
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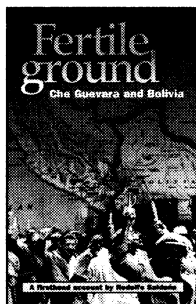
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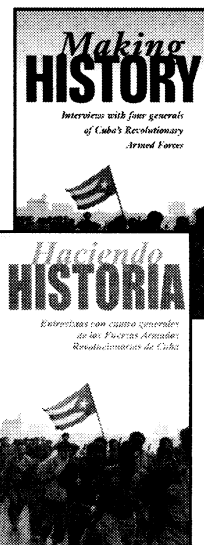


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# NATO troops in Yugoslavia step up aggression

BY PATRICK O'NEILL

Several days of unrest in the northeastern Kosova city of Mitrovica illustrate how volatile the territory of Yugoslavia remains. Occupation troops from Britain and France, stationed there as part of NATO forces, have used dogs, tear gas, and stun grenades as "crowd control" measures. Elsewhere, U.S. military personnel have stepped up aggressive moves, including roadblocks and searching of residents.

Further to the east, in a NATO-administered buffer zone between Kosova and Serbia, soldiers in a guerrilla organization that claims to defend the interests of the Albanian nationality have clashed with Serbian security forces.

Faced with continuing instability all over occupied Yugoslavia, including Bosnia-Herzegovina, U.S. president George Bush has backed off his election campaign pronouncements on the possible withdrawal of U.S. troops. "I have never said upon swearing in, we'll pull out of the Balkans," he said in January. "I've always said we will work in consultation with our European allies to convince them that they need to carry more of the peacekeeping role." Already more than 80 percent of the 72,000 NATO forces stationed in and around Yugoslavia are provided by the armies of the European powers.

The NATO-led "KFOR" occupation of Kosova involves 42,500 troops from more than 30 countries, with another 7,500 backup forces in Macedonia, Albania, and Greece. Each of the five major imperialist powers—France, Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom, and the United States—occupies and exercises command over five regions. Mitrovica falls within the zone assigned to Paris. Four days of unrest among Albanian residents of that city were sparked by the death January 29 of a 15-year-old Albanian boy in a Serbian district. The southern end of the main bridge over the Ibar river, which marks the dividing line between Albanian and Serb segments of the city, became a focal point of the protests.

The crowd reportedly directed most of its anger at the French troops, whom they accuse of being "pro-Serb" and whom they blame for the continued prohibition on Albanians returning to their homes north of the bridge.

French troops used tear gas and stun grenades—designed to cause panic by the sheer percussive loudness of their explosion—to try to disperse protesting crowds. The British forces sent to reinforce them drove several tanks through the industrial city, flanked by troops carrying full-length riot shields and firing plastic bullets. Attack dogs have been deployed on some foot patrols.

The count of the injured includes a number of soldiers and civilians.

## 'Ground Safety Zone'

Farther east a buffer zone extending from Kosova's border three miles into Serbia has become another flash point for the occupation. The area, dubbed the "Ground Safety Zone" by NATO's command, falls within the U.S.-controlled region known as "Multi-National Brigade East."

This has given the "Liberation Army of Presevo, Medveda and Bujanovac," an organization with the declared aim of annexing the Presevo Valley in Serbia to Kosova, a secure base of operations in the mountainous area from which they have been escalating their attacks on Belgrade's military and police units. Belgrade's forces are banned from the area, with the exception of lightly armed police. One Yugoslav soldier was killed and four injured during the last days of January.

In response to this escalation, Serbian president Vojislav Kostunica called on the United Nations Security Council to take action, and demanded access into the zone



U.S. soldiers search ethnic Albanians crossing from Kosova into Serbia in mid-January. U.S. forces have stepped up aggressive moves, including roadblocks and searching of residents.

for its troops. On January 30 the Security Council adopted a resolution drafted by U.S. officials condemning the "attacks by ethnic Albanian extremist groups," as summarized by the Associated Press. The resolution also "welcomed measures taken so far by NATO-led peacekeepers."

NATO forces stationed in the Kosova side of the zone have detained at least 60 people accused of being members or supporters of the insurgent organization, holding them without trial or access to legal redress in the detention center at U.S. Camp Bondsteel. The "G.I.'s in Kosovo are Judges, Jailers, and Much More," read a *New York Times* headline describing measures taken by the U.S. forces. Such measures notwithstanding, no decline in the number of attacks has been reported.

Several other contingents, including forces from Finland, Sweden, and the United Kingdom, operate alongside the 5,200 U.S. troops in the zone. In this region, too, the British officers reportedly stand out for their aggressive approach, "prid[ing] themselves on their austere military life and willingness to take more risks than their American counterparts," according to the *New York Times*.

## Washington/EU tensions

Bernard Kouchner, the head of the United Nations administration of the province, touched on one area of difference between Washington and the European powers as he stepped down from the post in January.

Previously known as a Nobel Peace Prize winner and co-founder of Doctors without Borders, and described as the "virtual czar of Kosovo" by the *New York Times*, Kouchner "criticized European countries for wanting to delay general elections...for a province-wide legislature," reported the newspaper.

"The Europeans are...worried about destabilizing Belgrade," he said, referring to the demands for Kosova independence that are likely to be a feature of any election. "But they will lose all their success if they destabilize Kosovo. Quick elections here

are the only way to keep violence away," he claimed.

## U.S. threat of economic measures

Washington and its major imperialist allies and rivals within the European Union are pressuring the new government in Serbia to hand over former president Slobodan Milosevic and other figures from his regime for trial as "war criminals." Milosevic was unseated by a general strike and mass actions in October of last year.

Zoran Djindjic, who became prime minister following elections in December for the Serbian parliament in which the Democratic Opposition of Serbia won two-thirds of the vote, reported after meeting Secretary of State Colin Powell on February 2 that he had been told that promised aid would be withdrawn if Belgrade did not "cooperate." Similar threats have been reported, but not confirmed, from officials of the European Union.

To date Kostunica and Djindjic have resisted demands for the extradition of Milosevic, who has been placed under 24-hour surveillance at his Belgrade home. Djindjic says that instead he will be tried in Yugoslavia. Opposition remains widespread among working people in Serbia to Washington's arrogant methods, including the demand for the extradition of the hated Milosevic.

Djindjic was one of several top government officials from the Yugoslav territory to visit Washington in early February. Ibrahim Rugova, president of Kosova during Belgrade's assault, received no response from Powell to his pleas for support for Kosova's independence.

Montenegrin president Milo Djukanovic fared even worse on a visit to argue for backing of independence for Montenegro, currently a province of Yugoslavia dominated by the Serbian regime. Powell rejected a meeting with him. State Department spokesperson Richard Boucher said that "Powell supports a democratic Montenegro within a democratic Yugoslavia," in the words of an Associated Press report.

## THE MILITANT

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Editor: MARTÍN KOPPEL

Business Manager: MAURICE WILLIAMS

Editorial Staff: Hilda Cuzco, Greg McCartan, Maggie Trowe, Brian Williams, and Maurice Williams.

Young Socialists column editor: ELENA TATE

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# DaimlerChrysler workers protest layoffs

BY ILONA GERSH

DETROIT—DaimlerChrysler's announcement that it will cut 26,000 jobs, or 20 percent of its workforce, in order to reduce production in face of sagging sales and profits was met with anger among workers at the Toledo Jeep Parkway Factory.

A new, state-of-the-art factory has been built across town to replace the 90-year-old factory and produce a new jeep model. DaimlerChrysler (DCX) originally said the new plant would be run on three shifts when it begins production in March. Now the company says it will have only two shifts, eliminating some 1,500 jobs. The Cherokee and Wrangler jeep production will be cut back earlier than expected at the old plant, which now employs more than 3,000. Larger layoffs than originally planned are anticipated. Friday, February 2 was the last workday for the night shift.

In response to the job cuts in Toledo, 40 members and supporters of United Auto Workers (UAW) Local 12 rallied outside of the Toledo Auto Show in downtown Toledo February 4. The rally was planned by a group of jeep workers, and had the support of the union.

"Transitional employees" helped initiate the action. These are around 350 jeep workers who were hired to work at the jeep plant through temporary agencies. Until they are hired by Chrysler after 120 days of work, they are paid less, are not on the seniority list, and don't get benefits. The company would lay off many workers after 119 days, forcing some to remain temporary for several years. Once hired in by Chrysler, workers thought they had the same union rights as everyone else. But when the company announced plans for taking bids into the new factory, these workers were told they had no seniority bidding or recall rights. After a series of protest meetings organized by these workers, the company granted them seniority rights.

Rally participants applauded and cheered when Tiffanee Watson, a young "transitional employee" who was hired last year announced, "We won our recall rights and our bidding rights, and we can win our jobs too, if we stick together. Just keep your heads up, and don't let it stress you out." Watson carried a sign that read, "26,000 layoffs, that's union busting."

The job cuts in Toledo are part of DaimlerChrysler's moves to restructure its auto division. The company is closing five plants in Toluca and Mexico City, Mexico; Cordoba, Argentina; and Campo Largo, Brazil.

The Mound Road engine plant in Detroit is also being shut. It is an old plant and has been on the chopping block for some time. Production shifts will be eliminated at five plants in the United States and Canada. Line speed will be reduced at two North American plants.

## Attempt to divide workers

O'Dene Carroll, who has worked at the Parkway plant for 16 years, carried a sign that said, "Fight Now or Starve Later—Chrysler Workers Unite," as he was interviewed by TV reporters. He told the *Militant* that Chrysler's decision to completely shut down plants in Mexico, Argentina, and Brazil was an attempt to divide workers. "It was a strategic decision," he said. "They're going to use it against us. They'll say, if you're not willing to work hard and sacrifice, we can always find workers in South America who will. And at the same time, the company hopes they can make the South American workers willing to work for even less than they're paid now." Carroll told participants in the rally, "This is just the beginning. We have to keep up the fight."

The job cuts are also a big topic of discussion at Textron Automotive Corp., which supplies plastic molded parts to several

DaimlerChrysler plants in the United States and Canada. Textron is DaimlerChrysler's fourth largest supplier.

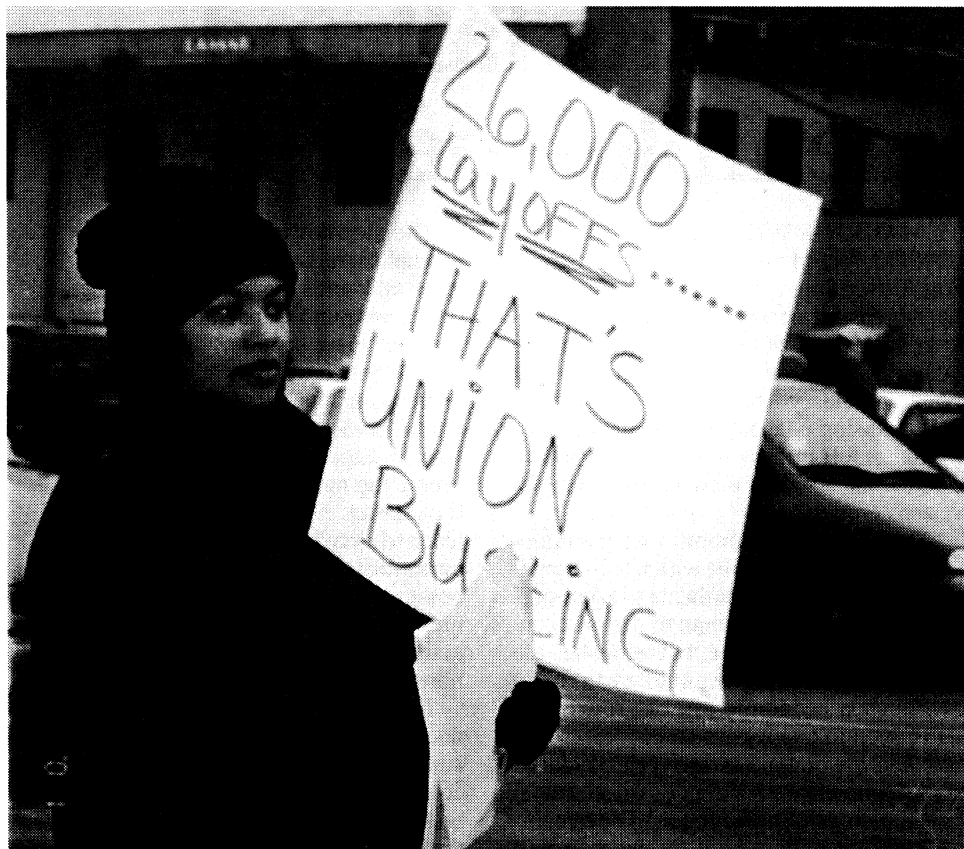
After learning about the march of 10,000 to protest job cuts in Britain, one worker said, "This is what we need to do. Maybe we could win back our jobs if we all got together and put up a fight."

Another production worker expressed doubt about the effectiveness of public protest. "Layoffs are something we should expect in the auto industry. But maybe it would work. It's better than doing nothing."

There have also been debates on DaimlerChrysler's decision to close plants in Mexico, Argentina, and Brazil, where workers get paid much less than in the United States.

The *Detroit News* carried an article titled, "DCX scores with union leadership—UAW, CAW credit company for sparing U.S., Canada plants." The article quotes the director of the Center for Automotive Research in Ann Arbor who said, "They certainly win points with the UAW and CAW [Canadian Auto Workers] by going after Mexico and South America. Otherwise you'd have probably heard some noise by now."

*Ilona Gersh is a member of United Auto Workers Local 157, and works at Textron Automotive Corp. in Westland, Michigan.*



Militant/Ilona Gersh

DaimlerChrysler worker Tiffanee Watson. She told rally in Toledo: "We won our recall and bidding rights, and we can win our jobs too, if we stick together."

## Iceland aluminum workers reject contract

BY SNORRI ARASON

HAFNARFJORDUR, Iceland—Workers at the ISAL aluminum plant here voted down a proposed new contract January 18. Out of the more than 300 unskilled workers, only 59 voted for the contract and a small majority of the 120 skilled workers voted against the new labor agreement.

Workers say the biggest issues are the company's demands for a four-year contract, the institution of bonuses, and a wage hike that may not keep up with the rising rate of inflation. The wages and working conditions of aluminum workers, once among the best paid in Iceland, have worsened relative to others in Iceland as a result of a long-term company assault.

For example, there has been a 90 percent increase in production over the past 10 years. At the same time the number of workers employed was slashed by 13.5 percent. On the average this equals a production increase of 120 percent for each worker over the past decade.

The aluminum workers' vote took place less than two weeks after the state negotiations committee reached an agreement with the teachers union, which had been on strike for two months, the longest in Iceland for decades. The teachers won a considerable pay raise as a result of their fight.

In late January fishermen voted to go on strike in the middle of March if they have not reached a labor agreement by then. One indicator of the increase in labor disputes here is a government announcement that in 2000 there were more hours logged at the state negotiators table than any year since 1980.

The aluminum industry is the second largest in Iceland after fishing. Last year aluminum accounted for 18 percent of the foreign trade compared to 67 percent for fishing products. In a drive to make Iceland the second largest aluminum producer in Europe by the end of the decade, the ruling class here plans to further expand production. Building aluminum plants in Iceland is attractive to capitalist investors because of the cheap energy prices and low labor costs. The electricity is generated from dams and geothermal power plants, both of which are renewable resources.

Today there are two large aluminum plants in Iceland. The ISAL plant in Straumsvík is owned by the Canadian and Swiss company, Alcan. It is situated 10 miles south of the capital city of Reykjavík. The plant, in operation since 1969, produces about 168,000 tons of aluminum a year.

Nordural, opened in 1998, is owned by Colombia Venture, a U.S.-controlled operation, and is located in Hvalfjörður, about 20 miles north of Reykjavík. Nordural currently produces 60,000 tons and plans to expand production to 240,000 tons a year. The company says that with new technology they estimate a production increase of up to

300,000 tons annually.

A group of Icelandic capitalists and the Norwegian company Hydro aluminum are seeking to build another plant on the east coast that would produce 360,000 tons of aluminum a year.

But these plans have sparked some disagreement within the ruling class over whether to grant permission to build the plant on the east coast or give Colombia Venture permission to expand.

At issue is the need to increase electrical production by building a huge hydroelectric power station. This has caused widespread debate here due to the dam's impact on the environment.

## Contract issues

The new contract was to give the workers an immediate 20 percent wage increase and another 3 percent each January for the next four years. In addition workers would receive productivity, "safety," and other bo-

nuses, called "licking bonus" by the workers. The employers have repeatedly tried to institute an extensive bonus system over the years, in particular after the plant was set up, but without lasting success.

Workers voted the contract down mainly for two reasons. Many oppose the bonus system and view it as a way for the company to kill workers' morale and pit them against each other.

The other reason is the length of the contract, which is four years. Inflation has been running between 3 percent and 6 percent last year. At the same time the Icelandic krona has fallen drastically compared to the U.S. dollar, cutting further into workers' buying power.

At the moment, the workers are still debating various aspects of the contract. They have not been told what the union officials or the company are going to do, but as one worker put it, "We voted this contract down and we can do it again."

## India quake not 'natural' disaster

BY MAURICE WILLIAMS

The devastating earthquake centered in the Indian state of Gujarat January 26 has brought to the fore practices by construction companies and government officials that have had deadly consequences, such as shoddy construction causing scores of homes and high-rise buildings to collapse like a house of cards, killing thousands who were in them.

More than 20,000 people are said to have died from the quake, the worst in 50 years, which registered 7.9 on the Richter scale. Hundreds of thousands have been left homeless.

There has been rising anger and strong complaints from working people about shabby construction, violation of building codes by contractors, and the government's failure to enforce quake-proofing measures. Kishore Chandran in Bhuj pointed to a building that was tilting at a 45 degree angle with three floors sunk in the ground. "This building has been built on a drain," he told news reporters. "The government should not have given permission" to construct it.

"No doubt this earthquake was a natural calamity," said Kirti Gajar, a resident of Ahmedabad and a civil engineer whose son was killed beneath a pile of rubble. "We can expect some damage, but nothing like this." Some 600,000 homeless people in Ahmedabad are living in camps or on the streets.

T.N. Gupta, who helped prepare a government study by scientists and engineers on natural disaster prevention, said, "Most builders want to do things as cheaply as possible and they can get their plans approved by greasing the right palms."

Conditions of a semicolonial country ex-

ploited for decades by imperialist powers turn a "natural disaster" such as an earthquake, cyclone, or flood into a social disaster with devastating consequences. "We had an earthquake in Latur that killed 9,700 people, said Gupta. "An earthquake of the same intensity in California killed five."

Meanwhile, the Indian government stated its plans to make working people foot the bill for the earthquake. "The people of the country should be ready for harsh taxes in the coming budget," declared Prime Minister Atal Vajpayee.

The government had been ill-prepared to deal with the crisis, with cranes, bulldozers, and other machines not arriving in demolished areas until more than 24 hours after the quake struck.

"Big concrete slabs have to be moved and if equipment had reached us earlier, we could have saved more lives," said one military official.

In Bhuj, a town of 150,000 people near the quake's epicenter, virtually all those living there have lost friends, relatives, and homes. They are living in refugee camps made of plastic sheets and cotton. The town's only hospital has also collapsed, the national director of disaster management reported.

In the regions most affected by the quake, hospitals lacked adequate facilities and rescue equipment was scarce. Little aid was offered from advanced capitalist countries in the first days after the catastrophe. Washington initially offered an insulting \$25,000 the day after the quake hit and said more would be available if requested. The U.S. government has since offered \$5 million, London \$14.6 million, and the German government \$6.1 million.

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# U.S. economy slows as profits fall and unemployment rises

BY MAURICE WILLIAMS

After a record 10-year economic expansion, U.S. ruling class figures are expressing increasing nervousness about a slowdown in growth of the economy as manufacturing activity declined for a sixth straight month in January. The National Association of Purchasing Management's manufacturing index fell in December to 41.2, which is below the 50-point mark needed to register zero growth.

"This is the sixth month that manufacturing has failed to grow, which technically by our numbers would indicate a recession," said Norbert Ore, chairman of the purchasing managers committee that publishes the report. He said the figures marked an end to "the longest economic run of growth that we've seen in history."

"The slowdown has arrived," declared Jerry Jasinowski, president of the National Association of Manufacturers. "The remaining question is how hard the landing will be."

U.S. finance capital's crisis of capital accumulation has stretched across several business cycles, with far-reaching consequences, including overproduction and excess industrial capacity, declining capital investment, bank and business failures, and intensified inter-imperialist competition. The latest expansion in the U.S. economy appears to be ending as corporate profits are falling in many industries and banks have started tightening their lending policies, the *New York Times* reported last November. Lockheed Martin Corp. said January 23 that its fourth-quarter earnings dropped 70 percent from the same period of 1999. Other big U.S. companies also reporting sagging profits, include Ford Motor Co., UAL Corp., and Sears, Roebuck & Co.

## Infant mortality rises in New York neighborhoods

BY MAGGIE TROWE

Infant mortality rose sharply in two New York City neighborhoods in 1999. City officials attributed the increase in deaths of children under the age of one to a reduction in funding in those areas to "Healthy Start," a federal program providing health care for pregnant women and infants.

In central Harlem, the infant mortality rate shot up from 11.4 infant deaths for every 1,000 live births in 1998 to 15.5 in 1999, a 35 percent increase. The population of central Harlem in the 1990 census was 87 percent African American and 10 percent Latino.

In the Fort Greene neighborhood of Brooklyn, the rate rose from 8.8 to 10.8 deaths per 1000 live births, a 25 percent jump. African Americans make up 47 percent of the population in Brooklyn Community 2, which encompasses Fort Greene, while the Latino population totals 17 percent. A total of 30 babies under the age of one died in central Harlem. Twenty-three died in Fort Greene.

Partly as a result of these increases, overall infant mortality in New York City rose from 6.8 to 6.9 from 1998 to 1999, after declining since the late 1980s. The citywide rate was 21.6 in 1970, before measures were taken by the city and federal governments to improve maternal and infant health care.

Services provided under the Healthy Start program include prenatal care, home nursing visits, and medical referrals. City officials say that in the late 1990s money for the program was not increased, while more locations providing the services were opened by the federal government. As a result, each location suffered an effective cut in funding.

The slowdown is a result of the normal capitalist business cycle, despite talk until recently from many bourgeois pundits that the expansion and the "new economy" hailed the end of these laws of development. In an upswing, the bosses add on workers and seek through fierce competition to expand their market share, producing more goods to be sold on the market. Eventually this process leads to a crisis of overproduction of commodities—more output than bosses can sell at a profit. Companies lay off workers, depressing the market more and causing reverberations in other sectors of the economy.

These pressures can be seen in the production of computers, where despite cost-cutting for ever more powerful machines, companies are turning out far more than can be sold profitably on the market. Gateway, the nation's second largest direct seller of computers, reported last November that its sales dropped 30 percent from the previous year's figures. Inventories at Compaq Computer were also building up.

The dotcom companies also took a deep nose dive. Yahoo Inc. said its profit would plummet 10 to 30 percent this year. "Dotcom mania was the froth on an exponential surge of [information technology] appliances driven largely by unprofitable businesses," asserted Stephen Roach, chief economist at the investment firm Morgan Stanley Dean Witter.

Michael Teumbrell, vice chairman of Paccar, one of the world's largest truck makers, said the heavy truck industry was burdened with a 20,000-unit inventory surplus. Both Ford and General Motors acknowledged that their inventories are expanding—Ford to about 90 days production and GM to 100 days. "Manufacturers fear being left with thousands of unsold models and plants churning out vehicles with no buyers," said an article in the *Financial Times* last December.

DaimlerChrysler announced January 29 plans to cut its manufacturing capacity by 15 percent. The bosses said they will close six plants and fire 26,000 workers by 2002.

In the steel industry, US Steel, the largest U.S. steelmaker, posted a loss of \$57 million in the fourth quarter last year. Five U.S. steel companies went bankrupt in 1998 and LTV, the third largest in the country, filed for bankruptcy in December. In January LTV laid off 500 workers at its blast furnace in Cleveland.

### 'Last hired, first fired'

With the latest job cuts, the U.S. unemployment rate crept slightly upward last month from 4.1 percent to 4.2 percent, according to a report from the U.S. Labor Department. The report indicated jobless rates increased significantly for Blacks and Latinos—the "last hired in an expansion and first sacked in a recession," the *Financial Times* noted. For Blacks, the unemployment rate is 8.5 percent and for Latinos it is 6.4 percent.

Working people are entering this slowdown in an already precarious position. Over the past two decades, the poverty rate among working-class families has soared by almost 50 percent. Health care has disintegrated as nearly half of all adults in working-class families living under the poverty level lack health insurance. Some 43 million U.S. citizens have no health coverage.

An increasing number of working people are seeking help from soup kitchens, food pantries, and homeless shelters. There is at least one working adult in 39 percent of U.S. households receiving emergency food. Nearly half of these adults are working at least 40 hours a week.

"People are working full time and have to make choices they shouldn't have to make—a doctor or a meal, a prescription or a meal, housing or a meal," said Deborah Leff, head of the country's largest domestic hunger relief organization.

An element that helped fuel the economic expansion in the 1990s was massive lending and underwriting of many corporations.



Health workers join January 17 protest organized by Service Employees International Union Local 1199 against planned layoff of 70 employees at Mount Sinai Hospital in New York. Workers in auto, steel, and other industries face job losses as U.S. economy slows.

The capitalists are alarmed about the rising number of defaults on loans. "Amid the good times, many U.S. companies are drowning in debt," read a headline in the *International Herald Tribune* last August. The article noted that "such household names as Pathmark Stores Inc. and United Artists Theatre Co. defaulted on bonds," adding to the \$15 billion total in defaulted debt across the country. Figures from the U.S. Census Bureau show a 15 percent increase in business failures from 1990 to 1998.

### Growing personal debt

During the same period the total number of bankruptcies filed rose nearly 50 percent, from 725,484 to 1,429,451. These figures include individuals as well as businesses. Some articles in the big business media have pointed with concern to the fact that over the past decade personal savings in the United States have hit a historic low as individual debt has shot up.

"The borrowing has been so extensive, in fact, that home owners, after building up equity through much of the 1960s and 1970s have let their ownership shares deteriorate over the last two decades to the lowest level on record," wrote Louis Uchitelle for the *New York Times*. "The average homeownership household owed lenders [banks and mortgage companies] 46 percent of the market value of its residence."

Other weaknesses rising to the surface of the U.S. economy include the speculative balloon in stock prices that has begun to deflate. U.S. stocks have lost \$5 trillion in value from their peak last March. The Nasdaq index, which is dominated by trade in technology stocks, fell 39 percent last year and 44 percent from its high point in March.

A slowdown in the U.S. economy, which absorbs 30 percent of the world's total economic output, will have serious repercussions around the globe. Some 5,000 auto jobs in Mexico that depend on car sales in the United States have been axed by the U.S. auto parts company Delphi. The German-U.S. carmaker DaimlerChrysler said 1,000 workers will be thrown out on the streets when it closes two plants in Toluca, an industrial hub west of Mexico City. Mexico has become the second largest auto parts supplier to the United States in recent months and now produces 98 percent of all television sets sold in North America.

Japan, with 40 percent of its exports going to the United States, will also be severely affected by a U.S. recession. The country has been mired in economic stagnation since the early 1990s.

In Europe, the wealthy ruling classes are hoping to be somewhat shielded from a downturn in the U.S. economy. According to estimates from the European Commission, the 12 countries within the euro zone earn slightly more than 2 percent of their national incomes from exports to the United States. Some 80 percent of trade in Europe is with the 12 countries that make up the imperialist trade bloc. While U.S. companies have had slumping car sales, the German auto companies—Volkswagen, Porsche, and BMW—have been raking in record profits.

But Britain has been hit by the slowdown in car sales, with GM being the latest to announce plant closings there. The British-Dutch steel company Corus Group PLC, which mainly sells flat steel to the auto industry, posted an operating loss of \$440.7

million. The company said it would cut 6,050 jobs and reduce its production by 20 percent.

### U.S. growth 'is close to zero'

"As far as we can judge we have had a very dramatic slowing down," Federal Reserve chairman Alan Greenspan told the Senate Budget Committee. He said that U.S. economic growth was "very close to zero" and that the manufacturing industry had built up too much inventory. In the face of contracting production, new orders, job losses, and declining exports, the Federal Reserve cut interest rates twice in January. Greenspan also backed George Bush's \$1.6 trillion, 10-year tax cut plan, which the president said was needed to boost the economy.

"We've got a recession in smokestack America," said Richard Berner, a chief economist at Morgan Stanley Dean Witter. He said many U.S. corporations "are not going to be investing in capital equipment" as a result.

Since late 1998 capital investment in the U.S. economy, excluding computers, has in fact declined. Despite talk in the big-business press about an "investment boom," the total stock of industrial plant and equipment in the United States has grown at an annual rate of 2 percent since 1980, compared to an annual rate of 3.9 percent over the previous three decades.

The money that was invested in new equipment went mainly into ways to make fewer workers produce more. During the 1990s the U.S. capitalists boosted their profit margins by increasing productivity, cutting costs, and taking a bigger slice of market share from their rivals. Workers paid for this with declining wages, longer workweeks, damage to their bodies, and with their lives.

But the capitalists have not been able to expand productive capacity to the level they need to generate another gigantic boom, set industrial profits on a long-term upward course, and accelerate capital accumulation. As Karl Marx explained, it is the long-term tendency for the profit rate to decline that intensifies competitive struggle between the capitalists and drives the bosses in their assaults on the working class. This has once again been confirmed by the economic developments in the past decade.

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Available from bookstores, including those listed on page 12.





# Factional infighting marks Ashcroft debate

BY GREG McCARTAN

Despite bipartisan backing for a number of major policy initiatives by the Bush administration, factional infighting continues unabated within the ruling class and between wings of the Democratic and Republican parties. The sharpest conflict in these cultural wars came in the hearing that led to the Senate confirmation of John Ashcroft for Attorney General, with Democrats promising similar conflicts if President George Bush nominates rightists for the Supreme Court.

At the same time there have been a spate of vicious articles with a strong antiwoman and anti-working class thrust targeting

Hillary Clinton and former president William Clinton. Many of these have taken advantage of the Clinton's decision to accept nearly \$200,000 in gifts prior to leaving the White House and extensive presidential pardons with dubious financial and political connections, including such figures as billionaire Marc Rich.

Ashcroft won Senate approval of his nomination to head the Justice Department in a 58-42 vote February 1, with all Republicans and eight Democrats voting in favor. His nomination drew more votes against than any other nomination for attorney general since 1925. The *New York Times* reported that during the two-day confirmation

hearings, "senators sparred across an array of social issues like abortion, civil rights, gun control, and religion. And the final hours of debate grew particularly harsh." Ashcroft also opposed a school desegregation plan in Missouri; fought the nomination of industrialist James Hormel, who is openly gay, as U.S. ambassador to Luxembourg; is against affirmative action; and worked to defeat the appointment to a federal judgeship of Ronnie White, Missouri's first Black Supreme Court judge.

Democrats declined to organize a filibuster to block the nomination, saying it was inappropriate to oppose a cabinet nominee in that manner. The 42 votes against are

enough to mount such a delaying tactic in the Senate for other Bush nominations, which Senator Thomas Daschle from South Dakota said "is not a threat. We retain our right to use those options available to us if somebody from the far, far right, the extreme right, would be nominated for an important and sensitive position."

New York senator Charles Schumer said the vote was a "shot across the bow" of the Bush administration and told the Senate that what has "happened with the Ashcroft nomination in terms of divisiveness would look small compared to the divisiveness that would occur if someone of Senator Ashcroft's beliefs were nominated to the United States Supreme Court."

John Edwards, Democratic senator from North Carolina, worried that when "so many Americans believe that when the doors are closed and the lights and the cameras are off, that Senator Ashcroft will not protect their interests, our responsibility is to do what is best for the country."

In response to the partisan dispute, New Hampshire Republican Robert Smith said the debate "is about the continuation of the election. The election is over," he told his Senate colleagues.

Ashcroft is also a firm proponent of the death penalty and is an opponent of immigrant rights. Neither of these were the subject of the Senate debate. The *Wall Street Journal* noted the debate over "Judge White had been about crime, specifically the death penalty, and Democrats sure didn't want to be soft on that."

Underpinning these ideological conflicts within the ruling class are divisions over how best to prepare for coming social and political struggles of working people as they resist the effects of the capitalist economic crisis and bipartisan assault on the gains and conquests of workers and farmers.

For example, the Associated Press reported on a meeting of 800 government officials in Washington February 1 to discuss "the sensitive issues of poverty, illegitimacy, and how to aid Americans with the most severe problems." The article notes that "strict rules, combined with a strong economy, have driven huge numbers off the [welfare] rolls entirely."

Meanwhile, people at the bottom of the income scale appear worse off than they

Continued on Page 14

## Pathfinder sells well to stores in the South

BY MARLA PUZISS

ATLANTA—In early January, six supporters of the Socialist Workers Party met with two party members to discuss how to organize sales of Pathfinder books to local bookstores, libraries, and colleges. The meeting began with a report on how Pathfinder supporters in the San Francisco Bay area have begun to organize this work, an effort described in the December 25 *Militant*.

The Atlanta meeting decided to focus in January on visits to bookstores in African-American and working-class shopping districts, allowing us to take advantage of the preparation by bookstores of their purchases for Black History Month in February.

We were convinced that many of Pathfinder's titles, such as the speeches and writings of revolutionary leaders like Malcolm X, Nelson Mandela, Thomas Sankara, Che Guevara, and others, would appeal to these bookstore owners and buyers.

We targeted eight bookstores. Two of them are small independent African-American bookstores and the rest are branches of national chain bookstores located in malls where many workers shop. We also made plans to visit a local library specializing in Black history, and two booksellers who have outlets at Atlanta's Hartsfield Airport.

We organized ourselves in teams of two, pairing a supporter with some experience in this work with a less experienced partner. This approach allows us to rapidly train new volunteers, who will gain confidence as Pathfinder representatives through participating in the meetings and discussions with bookstore owners and buyers.

We also discussed the importance of maintaining records of all sales visits—a step that will help us as we establish ongoing relationships with the book buyers we visit.

By the end of January we had carried out about half of the projected visits, with very positive results. A visit to one bookstore that has carried many different Pathfinder titles books over the years netted an order totaling \$1,109.

As the meeting with the bookstore owner began, she declared that she had completely sold out of all of the Malcolm X titles ordered last year, as well as the copies of *Capitalism's World Disorder* by SWP leader Jack Barnes.

She ordered a total of 30 books by Malcolm X, including 12 copies of *Malcolm X Talks to Young People*, and six each of *By Any Means Necessary*, *Malcolm X on Afro-*



Militant/Roy Inglee

Pathfinder literature table at January Bloody Sunday march in Derry, Northern Ireland. Supporters are increasing sales of Pathfinder titles by visiting more bookstores.

*American History*, and *The Final Speeches*.

She also ordered several copies each of *How Far We Slaves Have Come*, featuring speeches by Nelson Mandela and Fidel Castro, and *Nelson Mandela Speaks*, as well as *Thomas Sankara Speaks* and *W.E.B. Dubois Speaks*. To a new order of *Capitalism's World Disorder* she added *The Changing Face of U.S. Politics*, also by Barnes, and 10 copies of the *Communist Manifesto*.

The owner expressed interest in some of the newest Pathfinder titles, and decided to stock several copies of *Making History* and *Che Guevara Talks to Young People*.

Following our discussion of the intensified struggle by Palestinians for their national rights and the key importance of the working-class fight against anti-Semitism, she also decided to order a number of titles dealing with these questions, including Maxime Rodinson's *Israel: a Colonial Settler State?* and *The Jewish Question* by Abram Leon.

The buyer for another bookstore placed an order for \$486 worth of Pathfinder books. While confining her order to Malcolm X and Cuba titles, she reported that she herself had read *Capitalism's World Disorder*, and thought it was a "great book" which should draw a wider audience among her customers in the future. This buyer is looking forward

to another sales visit in six months' time.

During a sales visit to a bookstore in Atlanta's West End neighborhood, the bookstore manager, who was familiar with Pathfinder, took the catalog at the beginning of the meeting and started ordering books. Most of the titles he chose were by Malcolm X; he also listed five copies of *How Far We Slaves Have Come* and four copies of *Che Guevara Speaks to Young People* in an order totaling \$768.

When a team of two Pathfinder supporters visited a chain store in a local mall, the buyer told them he was unable to order books directly from Pathfinder. However, in a follow-up phone call the next day, he stated that he planned to order Pathfinder books through a national distributor which stocks a number of Pathfinder titles.

Encouraged by these initial successes, Atlanta Pathfinder supporters have resolved to complete visits to the list of target bookstores before the end of Black History Month. We also hope to draw more local supporters of Pathfinder into this work.

BY NAOMI CRAINE

CHARLOTTE, North Carolina—Pathfinder sales representatives in North Carolina opened a new account in January. The buyer at a Spanish-language book and music store that recently opened in Charlotte placed an order for 39 books and pamphlets, totaling \$225. The 14 different titles, all in Spanish, included *Che Talks to Young People*; *Capitalism's World Disorder*; *The Changing Face of U.S. Politics*; *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State*; *Socialism on Trial*; *Socialism and Man in Cuba*; and five copies of *The 1985-86 Hormel Meat-packers Strike in Austin, Minnesota*.

The store owner said she had hesitated ordering books for a similar store in Lumberton, doubting the interest among the farm workers, meat packers, and other laborers who constituted the majority of her customers. An initial order of \$500 worth of books from various publishing houses had sold out in a few days, however.

Marla Puziss is a member of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees Local 1644. Naomi Craine is a member of the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees Local 1501.

## UNITE gains at Royal Laundry

Continued from front page

and Marx, a large UNITE-organized men's suit plant a mile from Royal in Des Plaines, Illinois.

Workers sign up for union

At that Royal facility approximately 65 percent of the 88 workers have signed cards in support of union recognition. Key issues facing the mostly Latino workforce involve safety conditions—including the extreme heat—the use of harsh chemicals, incomplete overtime payment, and low wages.

This organizing drive comes on the heels of a successful strike at Five Star Hotel Laundry in Chicago in July and August of last year. Through their six-week-long stoppage, workers won union recognition and a contract.

In March 1999, some 1,200 workers at 15 Chicago-area laundries also voted in UNITE. In September 1999 they signed their first con-

tract at 13 of those laundries that provided some protection against the companies' use of the workers' immigration status to threaten to fire and discipline them, including a stipulation that the bosses must notify the union if Immigration and Naturalization Service agents contact the company.

Workers also gained medical coverage for their families, a modest wage increase, and participation in the National Textile Pension Fund.

The Five Star Hotel Laundry workers won a similar contract. Approximately 80 percent of the workforce in the industrial laundry industry in the Chicago area is now organized by UNITE. Chicago laundry workers join more than 20,000 UNITE workers in this industry nationwide.

Lisa Potash and Lisa-Marie Rottach are sewing machine operators and members of UNITE in Chicago.

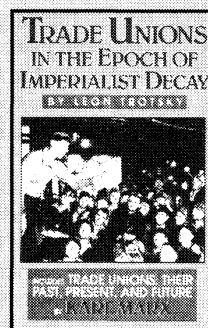
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# More evidence links NATO shells to cancer

BY GREG McCARTAN

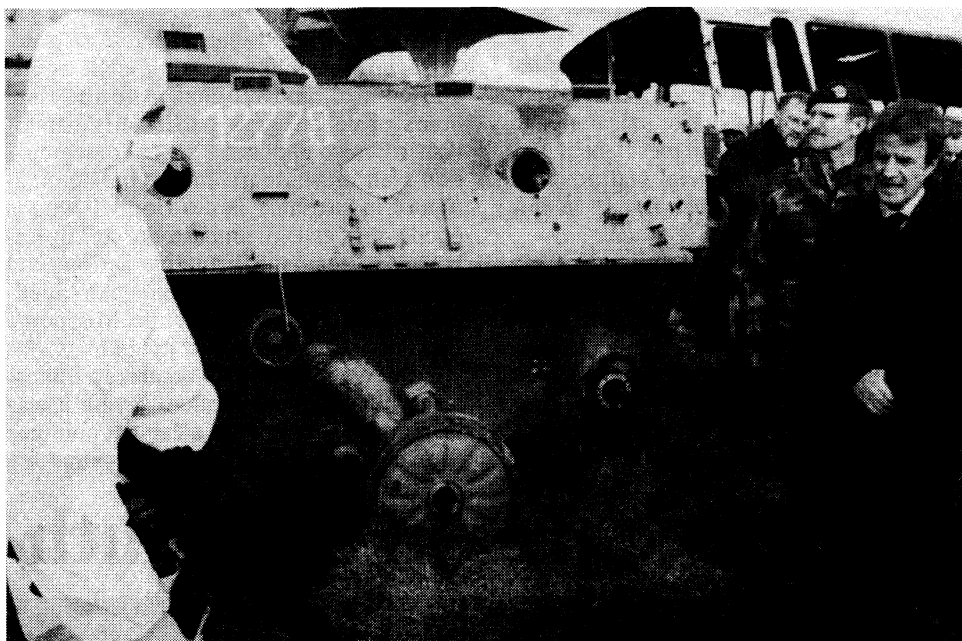
Evidence is slowly coming to light about the health dangers posed by the depleted uranium ammunition used by U.S. and allied forces in their military assaults in Iraq and Yugoslavia. Several of Washington's NATO allies began raising questions about the ammunition after troops who served in Bosnia and Kosova came down with illnesses, including cancer. Ten Italian soldiers who were part of the imperialist military intervention in the Balkans have died recently from leukemia and other illnesses.

The work of one researcher in the United States that strongly suggests links between depleted uranium and the Gulf War syndrome—a condition affecting many U.S. soldiers and working people in Iraq—has gained a wider audience in the wake of the growing alarm in Europe.

Depleted uranium is an extremely hard and heavy substance used in antitank projectiles. It characteristically ignites upon impact, boring a hole through the steel armor-plating used in military vehicles. A by-product of processing uranium for nuclear power plants, it is relatively low in radioactivity and cannot penetrate the body through the skin.

The U.S. military brass has used these facts to back up claims that there is no link between the ammunition and health problems of soldiers.

Recently, however, U.S. authorities, including a Pentagon spokesperson, acknowledged findings released by the United Nations showing that depleted uranium contains traces of highly radioactive plutonium, neptunium, and americium. The Pentagon official said this was due to "production



UN officials, right, watch soldier in Kosova check radiation levels on tank hit by NATO bomb. Alarm is spreading in Europe over depleted uranium ammunition.

flaws." Laboratories in Switzerland and Finland also announced that shrapnel they had examined contained small amounts of uranium 236, a substance that can only be produced inside a nuclear reactor and is commonly found in spent fuel rods.

"The problem," said French physicist Pierre Roussel, "is that this [uranium 236] isotope can only be produced in a reactor, where it is accompanied by far more radioactive elements."

After these facts became known, "Germany's ambassador took the highly

unusual step of calling in the acting U.S. ambassador in Berlin to complain about the information the U.S. supplied about weapons containing depleted uranium," wrote the *Financial Times* January 18. "It was not just a friendly discussion," one German defense official told the media. The *Times* wrote, "A U.S. official added that the possibility of plutonium traces had been factored in to risk assessments by experts."

Cover-up, double-talk, and misleading statements have for decades been hallmarks of the response by the U.S. government and

nuclear industry to concern about the effects of radiation. But Washington's wars on the European continent against the people of Yugoslavia, its growing rivalries with other imperialist powers there, and strains within the NATO military alliance are making it harder to maintain a unanimous official line that there is no link between the ammunition and widespread illnesses among civilian populations and troops alike.

Evidence suggesting links between the Gulf War syndrome and depleted uranium has resulted from the researches of Asaf Durakovic, a retired United States Army colonel who worked as a chief of nuclear medicine at the Veterans Administration (VA) Hospital in Wilmington, Delaware, in the 1990s.

Durakovic says that when he started tests on 24 Gulf War veterans referred by a college in New Jersey, urine samples were lost and his efforts to get more precise tests were discouraged. He was eventually dismissed and the post abolished in 1997. A VA spokesperson said, "we did not need a full-time nuclear medicine physician."

Durakovic is respected in his field, having worked for 30 years in Britain, Canada, and the United States. He has won praise from the Defense Nuclear Agency and has presented papers to international forums on nuclear medicine. Following his dismissal he has continued his work with privately funded research in Canada, examining the body fluids of more than 40 soldiers who were deployed in the Mideast during Washington's assault on Iraq.

Using the technique of mass spectrometry, which measures the relative abundance of each isotope in the body, Durakovic says that he is finding evidence of depleted uranium and uranium 236 in 62 percent of the veterans he examines, including in urine and in bone material. When depleted uranium is blown up, he explains, "it changes into uranium oxides—tiny, hard particles that are microns in size. They can stay airborne as aerosols, be blown around by the wind, and fall down as dust. Because they are the size of microns people can inhale them." Once in the bloodstream, they can be carried to bones, lymph nodes, lungs, or kidneys, lodge there, and cause damage as they emit low-level radiation over a period of time.

## Company fined for maiming of meat packer

BY KEVIN DWIRE  
AND KAREN RAY

WORTHINGTON, Minnesota—The Swift & Co. meatpacking plant here and the company it hires to provide cleaning crews are appealing fines issued by the Minnesota Occupational Safety and Health Administration for an October incident in which a sanitation worker lost both legs after becoming trapped in an auger.

Minnesota OSHA officials fined National Service Corp. (NSC) \$34,200. Swift was fined \$2,100. Both companies filed notice on January 18 that they are contesting the fines.

NSC is based in Mount Pleasant, Iowa, and contracts for sanitation services at meatpacking plants. NSC workers at Worthington are attempting to organize into the United Food and Commercial Workers union.

Santos Marroquin, 32, became caught in the meat auger around 4:00 a.m., October 11 as he was cleaning the machine. Two surgeons from Avera McKennan Hospital in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, were flown to the plant by helicopter, arriving three and a half hours later. One doctor said Marroquin's legs were "pulverized" from the knees down. They amputated his legs in the plant, one above the knee and the other below, after Marroquin was freed from the machine.

"Actually, the employees there, I think, were really the ones that should get the credit," Dr. Greg Alvine told the *Worthington Daily Globe*. "They were able to pack cold towels around him and cut the side of this meat grinder away so we could get at his legs." A worker used a pipe wrench to back up the auger and help free Marroquin from the machine so the surgeons could work on him. "They were just amazing at how calm and cool and collected they were in the face of a tragedy like this when they know the employee," the Sioux Falls orthopedic surgeon said.

Raymundo Diaz, who works at Swift and is a member of United Food and Commercial Workers Local 1162, told the *Militant* that the company started the line at 6:00 a.m. while Marroquin was still trapped, and ran production until OSHA ordered them to shut down. "The company cared more about the machine and production than about the worker," Diaz said.

OSHA fined NSC \$31,500 for a "willful violation" for not enforcing the use of a lock by the employee assigned to sanitize the "hash gut" grinder. "Basically, what Minnesota OSHA found is that there's documentation at the plant that showed the company [NSC] was aware that the condition existed

and failed to act on it," according to OSHA communications director James Honerman. The maximum penalty for a willful violation is \$70,000.

NSC was also fined \$2,700 for a serious violation because Swift mechanics who disassembled the machine did not stay once they removed their locks to make sure NSC workers lock out before cleaning the equipment. Swift was fined \$2,100 for the same

violation.

The accident at Worthington occurred two months after a maintenance worker, Gabriel Hernandez, was killed at the Farmland meat processing plant in Albert Lea, Minnesota, after becoming trapped in a meat tumbler.

Kevin Dwire and Karen Ray are members of United Food and Commercial Workers Local 9 at Quality Pork Processors.

## S. African court overturns auto workers' victory

BY T. J. FIGUEROA

PRETORIA, South Africa—Some 1,300 workers in the town of Uitenhage won a back-to-work ruling January 23 that quickly resonated throughout the employing class and among trade union officials in South Africa. However, the judgement was soon overturned by the Labor Court following an outcry from the employers.

The workers were fired from the Volkswagen auto plant in the Eastern Cape province town in February 2000 after going on strike "illegally." A number of workers in the plant, which is organized by the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA), an affiliate of the Congress of South African Trade Unions, sharply opposed a deal that union officials had negotiated with the VW bosses for production of the company's A4 Golf model that gave up certain rights, including how leave time was scheduled.

Thirteen NUMSA shop stewards, accused of agitating against the agreement, were suspended by local union officials for "bringing the union into serious disrepute." In protest, a segment of workers walked off the job. NUMSA and COSATU officials called on them to return to work. When they did not, the company fired them.

In its surprise ruling, the Council for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration, a body established after South Africa's nonracial, democratic elections in 1994 to arbitrate labor disputes, ruled that Volkswagen must rehire all the fired workers by February 5.

It said the firing was "fair," but that the procedures followed by the company were not.

Volkswagen immediately demanded, and won, a reversal of the ruling. A Labor Court set aside the judgement on February 2, putting it into a review process that may take months. In the interim, the workers are not allowed to go back to work.

After they were fired, the workers linked up with the Oil, General, and Allied Work-

ers' Union, which formed after a split from another COSATU union.

That the original ruling came as an unpleasant surprise to the employing class was made clear in a January 26 article in London's *Financial Times*. "Every company's worst nightmare became a reality for the German car manufacturer's South African subsidiary this week, when the government's arbitration body ordered the reinstatement of 1,300 workers who were dismissed last year for staging an illegal strike," wrote Nicol Degli Innocenti.

"The burden that labour laws and the country's notoriously militant trade unions put on employers is regarded by many as

excessive. Even the government has pledged to introduce more flexibility in an effort to attract the foreign investment the country desperately needs. Foreign direct investment last year plunged to less than \$2 billion from \$4 billion in 1999," the article said. The Volkswagen events "go some way towards explaining the reasons behind investors' flight."

The article continued: "Thabo Mbeki, the South African president, surprised and delighted the business community last year when he referred to the VW strike in his state of the nation address. 'Illegal and unjustified strikes such as the one at Uitenhage cannot be tolerated,' he said."

## Arizona copper bosses, blaming energy crisis, lay off miners

BY BETSY McDONALD  
AND CHESSIE MOLANO

TUGSON, Arizona—Citing soaring energy costs, Phelps Dodge Corp. notified workers of impending layoffs at the Sierrita mine in Arizona and the Chino and Tyrone mines in New Mexico. Some 2,350 workers at these three mines, which produce copper and molybdenum, will be affected.

Miners were told the layoffs are a result of the recent energy crisis combined with the low market prices of molybdenum, a mining byproduct that is a metallic chemical element used to harden steel. It has many industrial uses.

J. Steven Whisler, Phelps Dodge's chief executive, told the media that the California power crisis has forced Phelps Dodge to scramble to supply diesel fuel at some facilities. The rising price and limited availability of electricity along with the higher costs for diesel fuel and natural gas have affected the production costs of molybdenum.

Phelps Dodge is the world's second-largest copper producer. According to the *Wall Street Journal*, this move is the "most drastic reaction by heavy industry to steeply rising energy prices" so far.

The *Tucson Citizen* quoted Robert Wishart, president of Phelps Dodge Sierrita Inc., as saying that global production competition and a glut of molybdenum has driven the price from \$8 to \$9 a pound in the mid-1990s to about \$2.19 a week ago. Profits from the Sierrita, Chino, and Tyrone mines are suffering as a result.

Wishart claimed the miners took the news of the closure well and called the mood of the workers downbeat but resolute. However, a resident of the mining area told *Militant* reporters that the layoffs "will hurt everyone around here. Phelps Dodge is good at that. Look at what they did at Clifton and Ajo," referring to the company's breaking of the union, with the help of the National Guard, in 1984 at the two copper mines in Arizona.



# Volunteers make 'red weekend' a success

## Planning, hard work, and collective effort of 125 improves Pathfinder Building

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

NEW YORK—More than 125 socialist workers, young socialists, and other supporters of Pathfinder Press pitched in to make a February 2-4 "red weekend" of volunteer labor at the Pathfinder Building here a spirited and productive mobilization. Good planning, hard work, and a collective effort made toward the common goal of ensuring the continued production of Marxist and other revolutionary books and pamphlets made the red weekend a success. A number of people came into New York early and stayed during the following week to complete maintenance and repair projects that went beyond the scope of the three-day effort.

This was the first such project for Pat Coomey, 33, from Ravenna, Ohio. After reading the *Militant* for about a year, he got in touch with the Pathfinder bookstore in Cleveland and then attended a couple of Militant Labor Forums. "You don't know things like this exist until you meet other people and learn from them what Pathfinder is all about," he said.

Paul Mailhot, organizer of the steering committee of the project, said the red weekend "was organized concurrently with an international team of Pathfinder supporters participating in the Havana International Book Fair, four new titles by Pathfinder coming off the presses, and an increased production of out-of-print titles by Pathfinder's printshop.

"Pathfinder supporters are also scoring some initial successes in their work to expand the distribution of Pathfinder books in stores and other outlets in several countries," he said, "and members of the Socialist

them to advance their struggles."

Participants came from Tucson, Arizona, and Santa Cruz, California, as well as from Montreal, Toronto, San Francisco, Seattle, Los Angeles, Houston, Miami, Tampa, Pittsburgh, Chicago, Detroit, Cleveland, Philadelphia, Washington, New York, Newark, and Charlotte, North Carolina.

The bulk of the work was focused on maintenance and repair projects throughout the Pathfinder Building, which houses the publisher and its printshop, as well as the editorial offices of the *Militant* and *Perspectiva Mundial*. This included painting, electrical work, plumbing, floor repairs, phone and computer network wiring work, cleaning, and organization of maintenance supplies. Teams of volunteers working on these various projects included young people working together with skilled electricians and carpenters, picking up some important skills and knowledge in the process.

In addition, a team of supporters researched the *Militant* and other publications that covered Washington's invasion of Cuba at the Bay of Pigs in 1961 and organized an extensive set of clippings from what they found as an aid to Pathfinder staff's editorial work on *Bay of Pigs: Washington's First Military Defeat in the Americas*.

The volunteer work project was hosted by the four branches of the SWP in the area, which organized to house the numerous volunteers coming from out of town. The weekend activities included Militant Labor Forums in Brooklyn, Upper Manhattan, New York's Garment District, and Newark, New Jersey, on Friday night—three of them on the energy crisis and another on the Irish



Militant/Hilda Cuzco

Teams were organized to include all generations and skill levels. Above, a range of plumbing jobs were completed during the "red weekend."

was making sure every light fixture was in proper working order in the building—about 20 ballasts were replaced and work done on at least 20 others; reorganizing the various tools and other supplies kept in the basement so that those doing ongoing maintenance work can more easily find what they need; stripping and waxing Pathfinder's printshop office; repairing and repainting the bindery's shipping and receiving office; replacing some 100 supports for the heavy shelving used to warehouse boxes of books prior to being shipped out to customers; fixing up the women's locker room, mapping of the entire phone and computer network wiring in the building, which will greatly aid maintenance of this system in the future. Innumerable door handles, latches, hinges, and other small hardware items were tightened, repaired, or replaced. Exhaust fans were cleaned, repaired, or replaced. Every air vent in the building was cleaned.

Some two dozen people, most of whom were first-time participants in a red weekend project, took part in a Sunday morning tour of the Pathfinder Building. "I'm very impressed," said Markeith Avpry, 39, a meat packer and member of the United Food and Commercial Workers union in Newark, New Jersey, after seeing the full scope of activities that takes place in the building. He recently subscribed to the *Militant*, joined the Pathfinder Readers Club, and has been reading through the titles *Malcolm X Talks to Young People* and *The 1985-86 Hormel Meat Packers Strike in Austin, Minnesota*.

As project participants were wrapping up their final day of work on Sunday, about a dozen volunteers joined sales teams that afternoon, setting up three literature tables with Pathfinder books, the *Militant*, and *Perspectiva Mundial*, in the Garment District area of Manhattan, Washington Heights, and Newark, New Jersey.

Dimitris, 19, and Lena, 24, both of whom recently joined the Young Socialists, made the trip from Montreal and Toronto respectively. Dimitris said that he first got involved in politics after reading about the Cuban revolution and "admiring people who sacrifice their lives for others." Lena, who worked on the networking team, said the

project was "really quite special. People are working toward goals and are motivated." She added, "It's exciting to discover problems on the networking system and solve them as a contribution to the smooth running of this operation."

Emphasizing the YS's internationalist perspective, Lena pointed out that while she was in New York for the red weekend, another YS member from Montreal was part of the team in Havana helping to staff the Pathfinder literature table at the book fair there.

### Pathfinder Reprint Project

At a brief program during the Saturday evening social, Michele Smith, a supporter of the SWP from San Francisco, pointed to the progress made by the Pathfinder Reprint Project towards reaching its goal of having 50 percent of all Pathfinder titles in digital form on CDs by May 1. "As of today, we're 44.7 percent done. We've completed 33 books in the past six months," Smith reported.

Pathfinder supporters in the Bay Area have also taken the lead on organizing to sell Pathfinder to stores, libraries, and other outlets in the Bay Area. "The Reprint Project puts us on a sound footing for taking the next steps in expanding Pathfinder 'repping' work worldwide," she said. In January, Pathfinder processed orders for 34,600 books—significantly higher than the previous two years.

Dean Cook, from Houston and one of the organizers of the project, said, "When you participate in one of these red weekends, you learn that working people are a lot different than the bosses would have us think. They keep telling us that we're 'lazy,' that we won't do any work without a supervisor standing over us. But we organized to do the work this weekend and we collectively did it. This helps us understand how society can be different, that working people are capable of running society."

Cook held up the beautiful new cover of the soon-to-be printed Pathfinder book on the defeat of Washington's forces at the Bay of Pigs by working people in Cuba. "With these books we strengthen our movement as we prepare for the working class to take power," he said.



Militant/Hilda Cuzco

Team researches *Militant* and other publications to aid Pathfinder's editorial work on new title, *Bay of Pigs: Washington's First Military Defeat in the Americas*.

Workers Party and Young Socialists are getting these books into the hands of working people on the job and through street tables in workers districts."

Mailhot said there will be public presentations at the book fair in Havana for two Pathfinder titles, *Hacienda historia*, the Spanish language edition of *Making History: Interviews with Four Generals of Cuba's Revolutionary Armed Forces*, and the newly printed *Fertile Ground: Che Guevara and Bolivia*. The Pathfinder staff is also organizing to complete the editorial work on *Bay of Pigs: Washington's First Military Defeat in the Americas*, to be available in March. Over the course of the weekend, workers in the printshop completed binding *Fidel Castro's Political Strategy* and collated *What is Surrealism?*

A dinner and social February 3, featuring an ample spread of food and refreshments, dancing, and a short program, raised more than \$1,200 for the Books for Cuba Fund. The fund makes possible donations of Pathfinder books to schools, libraries, revolutionary organizations, and factory and farmer cooperative libraries in Cuba, Mailhot said.

"Overall, this is at the center of our response to the resistance of workers and farmers to the assaults and brutalities of the employers and their governments, both here and abroad. We are doing everything possible to make sure the communist program contained in the books and pamphlets published by Pathfinder are available and accessible to workers and farmers who need

freedom struggle.

The project built upon a previous volunteer effort December 14-24, in which 120 people worked on transferring Pathfinder's inventory and customer and financial information onto an Internet-based program.

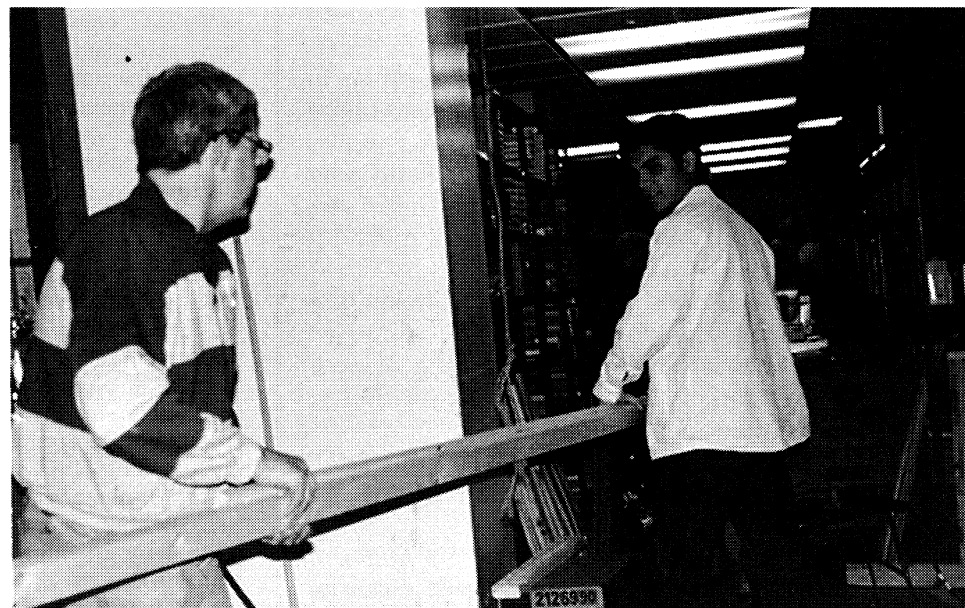
"Our work this weekend will ensure that the building where Pathfinder books are produced, as well as the *Militant*, and *Perspectiva Mundial*," Mailhot told nearly 100 people crowded into the lunchroom the morning of February 3, "is functioning in tip-top working order so that those who carry out work here can have a good, working environment to help them be as productive and efficient as possible."

### 'What communist movement is about'

Marlén Ortega, 19, a student in Chicago and a member of the Young Socialists there, said that participating in this project was "a great way to meet others and get a sense of what the communist movement is all about." She added, "When you come here you see the hard work that goes into producing and printing Pathfinder books. Each time I sell one of these books off a literature table I get excited because one more person now has a book to interest him or her in revolutionary politics."

Other young people participating in the project—all of whom were interested in learning more about the Young Socialists—included three who came from Santa Cruz, California, and two from Pittsburgh.

Among the projects taken on and completed through the course of this weekend



Militant/Hilda Cuzco

Volunteers carried out several carpentry projects to aid Pathfinder book distribution

# 'A weapon in our common struggle'

## Pathfinder presents copies of 'Haciendo historia' to Combatants Association

Below are the remarks given by Mary-Alice Waters, president of Pathfinder Press, in presenting 300 copies of *Haciendo historia: entrevistas con cuatro generales de las Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Cuba*, to the Association of Combatants of the Cuban Revolution (ACRC) at a special event on February 7 at the 10th Havana International Book Fair. The book is Pathfinder's newly published Spanish-language edition of *Making History: Interviews with Four Generals of Cuba's Revolutionary Armed Forces*.

As Waters explains, the donation came about as a result of supporters of Pathfinder, the *Militant*, and *Perspectiva Mundial* seeing the importance of how the combatants association is using the book in Cuba. The ACRC brings together revolutionary fighters of several generations in Cuba to engage in "patriotic, military, and internationalist education work of reaching new generations with the experiences" of its members, in the words of Cuban brigadier general Harry Villegas (see report of the presentation on following page).

The *Militant* has carried interviews with leaders of the ACRC in two previous issues. In the issue of June 14, 1999, the article "Cuban generals: 'We're not veterans, we're combatants,'" by Mary-Alice Waters and Martin Koppel, features an interview with Brig. Gen. Gustavo Chui Beltrán and Brig. Gen. Sergio Pérez Lezcano. Beltrán was interviewed again for the article "We try to be a catalyst," by Luis Madrid and Mary-Alice Waters, published in the January 29 issue of this year. Also interviewed for that article were Brig. Gen. Harry Villegas and Brig. Gen. Delsa Esther Puebla.



First of all, a heartfelt thanks to all of you who are here this afternoon to join us in this



Workers on strike against Tartan Textile laundry in Florida in July. The deteriorating conditions of life for working people in the United States generate a vanguard who find ways to link up with each other and are open to learning the truth about the Cuban revolution, said Waters.

### Books for Cuba: a special appeal

*Militant* readers have for many years been contributing regularly to our "Books for Cuba" Fund. The fund makes it possible for Pathfinder Press to fill the frequent requests it receives from libraries, schools, political organizations, and others in Cuba for complimentary copies of a broad range of Pathfinder titles.

The fund also makes it possible for Pathfinder to sell a large selection of titles at the Havana International Book Fair in pesos at prices most Cubans can afford.

This year the Books for Cuba Fund is helping to make possible the donation of 350 copies of *Haciendo historia* for distribution by the Association of Combatants of the Cuban Revolution to each of its municipal groups.

Since December more than \$2,300 has been raised for the fund, but contributions of any size are still needed.

Checks can be made payable to the *Militant*, earmarked "Books for Cuba Fund," and mailed to the *Militant*, 410 West Street, New York, NY 10014.

presentation of Pathfinder's edition of *Haciendo historia*, and the donation of some 300 copies of this powerful book to the Association of Combatants of the Cuban Revolution.

Almost exactly 40 years ago, the militiamen caught in the dramatic photo reproduced on the cover of *Haciendo historia* marched along the Malecón as they mobilized to defend their revolution against the U.S.-organized invasion that they—and the entire world—knew was coming.

Barely three months later, in less than 72 hours of combat on the beaches of Girón, Cuba's revolutionary militias, together with the fledgling Revolutionary Armed Forces recently born out of the victorious Rebel Army of the Sierras, crushed the counterrevolutionary forces armed, trained, and deployed by Washington. That historic victory, the first military defeat of U.S. imperialism in the Americas, resounds across the globe, even to this day. It slammed the door on the fevered delusions of the Yankee rulers that the first socialist revolution in this hemisphere would be rapidly or easily defeated. Washington is still living with the consequences of that defeat, and the oppressed and exploited of the world are still affected by its example.

In the United States, those who oppose Washington's imperial arrogance and insupportably brutal and oppressive course in the world drew great strength from our victory at Girón.

There could not be a more appropriate moment for Pathfinder Press to bring out its edition of *Haciendo historia*, the English edition of which was launched a year ago at

Continued from front page

Cuba's best-known writers and the guest of honor at this year's fair, addressed the opening of the nine-day event. Eduardo Junco, the ambassador to Cuba from Spain, the honored country at the event this year, gave brief greetings, saying that books were necessary for freedom. He was followed by Iroel Sánchez, president of the Cuban Book Institute. Sánchez noted, "Thanks to the freedom we have won, culture belongs to the majority in this country." As a result of the Cuban revolution, he said, "we are a country without illiteracy."

The book fair, which is being held at the historic San Carlos de la Cabaña fortress, an 18th century Spanish fort, has a festival atmosphere. Every day tens of thousands have crowded the book stalls and formed snaking lines across the sunny courtyards to purchase titles on a wide range of topics. A large Children's Pavilion draws thousands of families to buy much-coveted children's books and to watch puppet shows and musical performances.

Pathfinder has participated in every international book fair here since 1986. This year the revolutionary publisher's booth is being staffed by an international team of volunteers from Canada,



Militant/Martin Koppel

Above, Pathfinder president Mary-Alice Waters interviews Brig. Gen. Harry Villegas in 1998; left, Cuban brigadier generals Sergio Pérez Lezcano (left) and Gustavo Chui Beltrán during 1998 interview with *Militant*. The three Cuban officers are leaders of the Association of Combatants of the Cuban Revolution, which received the donation of *Haciendo historia* at Havana Book Fair on February 7. "We are grateful for the contributions of workers in the U.S. who give part of their wages to make this donation possible," Beltrán said.

the Havana book fair together with Editora Política's edition of the Spanish. Through the stories of Néstor López Cuba, Enrique Carreras, José Ramón Fernández, and Harry Villegas, the pages of *Haciendo historia* reveal the secret of the Cuban revolution that imperial Washington could never—and will never—comprehend.

In every victorious revolution, it is "the men and women from nowhere," ordinary

working people in their millions, who simply say "enough," as the Second Declaration of Havana puts it so eloquently, and begin to march. As they transform the conditions of their lives, they transform themselves. The impossible becomes possible.

Why is this book important inside the United States right now? Why has Pathfinder published it?

The enormous weight of imperialism today bears down on the people of Cuba primarily through the economic warfare that is unending, and the political and diplo-

## Interest in books runs high at Havana fair

France, Iceland, Iran, Sweden, and the United Kingdom.

One new Pathfinder title that has attracted interest is *Fertile Ground: Che Guevara and Bolivia*, an interview with Bolivian communist leader Rodolfo Saldaña, who joined ranks with Ernesto Che Guevara in the 1966-67 revolutionary front led by Guevara in that South American country. A launching of *Fertile Ground* is scheduled to take place at the fair February 9. It will also highlight the Spanish-language edition being brought out by Editora Política, the publishing house of the Central Committee of the Cuban Communist Party.

Besides *Fertile Ground* and books by Malcolm X, the most popular titles at the Pathfinder booth so far include *Capitalism's World Disorder* and *The Changing Face of U.S. Politics*, both by U.S. communist leader Jack Barnes, as well as issue 5 of *Nueva Internacional* magazine with the lead article "U.S. Imperialism Has Lost the Cold War."

Other titles drawing attention include a Spanish-language compilation of articles on the origins of women's oppression by Evelyn Reed; *Che Guevara Talks to Young People*; *How Far We Slaves Have Come*, by Nelson Mandela and Fidel Castro; *In Defense of Marxism*, and *The Revolution Betrayed*, the latter two by Leon Trotsky.

A number of people who have visited Pathfinder's booth in previous years have returned this year. Josué Gómez Perdomo, a 29-year-old teacher, bought "U.S. Imperialism Has Lost the Cold War" last year. Visiting the booth again this year, he said he had read that issue of the Marxist magazine and called it "excellent, especially the parts about what really happened in the Eastern European countries and why the governments there fell [in the early 1990s.]

That's information that's hard to get."

A half dozen students from the University of Havana, members of the Federation of University Students (FEU), came to write down titles of books they planned to buy later in the week. Last year these students purchased *Nueva Internacional* no. 1, featuring the article "The Opening Guns of World War III," as well as the Spanish-language edition of *Socialism on Trial* by James P. Cannon and a copy of *Perspectiva Mundial*, a monthly socialist magazine in Spanish.

One student explained that he was especially interested in the testimony of Cannon, a leader of the U.S. Socialist Workers Party, at the 1941 trial of SWP leaders, who were railroaded to jail because of their opposition to Washington's participation in the imperialist slaughter of World War II. He said he had been unaware there were communists who were active in the United States.

Giulio Ricci, another of the students, said, "Your books are very helpful for understanding the situation in the United States. We have a lot of respect for you because you are preparing for the moment when there will be big opportunities to build a revolutionary party."

Aurelio Alonso Torres, a tobacco worker at the José Cano plant in Havana, spent more than an hour looking at Pathfinder books. Now in his 60s, he took part in his first internationalist mission, to Algeria, when he was 19, in the early 1960s. He spent 17 years in Cuba's Revolutionary Armed Forces.

Torres commented to some of the younger volunteers at the Pathfinder booth, "It's not enough to believe. We have to read in order to go forward. You need to know the past in order to understand the present and build the future."



# 'uggles today'

## iation at Havana Book Fair

matic offensive that accompanies it. Similar pressures come down on working people inside the United States as well. For the large majority of working people, the deteriorating conditions of life and work, the direct consequence of the capitalist economic offensive, are generating something new, something we have not seen in decades. What we see is not only increasing resistance—strikes, work stoppages, union organizing drives, farm protests, marches in support of immigrant workers, protests against police brutality—but something of even greater importance.

Vanguard workers and farmers who emerge in the course of different struggles—irrespective of whether any particular struggle ends in victory, defeat, or a stand-off—are finding ways to link up with each other, to extend the hand of solidarity from one battle to another, to test and learn from each other as they prepare for new rounds of struggle. They are searching for examples of how to fight effectively, and to win. And that is why their minds are open to seeing and learning the truth about the Cuban Revolution. As one such farmer who visited Cuba last year expressed it to his Cuban brothers and sisters, "We have come here because we think we can learn something from you about fighting, but even more important, about winning."

The self-promotion of all the imperialist agencies proclaims that world capitalism, with Washington at its head, has reached new heights of invincibility. But the men and women of Cuba have proven the opposite for 40-plus years. Through the pages of *Haciendo historia* we meet some of the individuals who are typical of the men and women who have made this possible. And therein lies its power.

*Haciendo historia* is not a book about past battles, but a weapon in our common struggles today, in the Americas and throughout the world.

Last November, in the course of an interview with leaders of the Association of Combatants of the Cuban Revolution, including generals Chui Beltrán, Teté Puebla, and Harry Villegas, reporters for the U.S.-based socialist periodicals, the *Militant* and *Perspectiva Mundial*, became aware of how this book is being used by those of you who are engaged in the patriotic, internationalist political work that is at the center

of the activities of the more than 330,000 members of the Association. It is important to you for some of the same reasons that this book is important to those of us in the United States and elsewhere around the world who are fighting to advance the socialist and internationalist perspectives that are at the center of the Cuban Revolution. We learned that the Association was trying to assemble some 300 copies of *Haciendo historia* so that each municipal committee could have a copy to use in its work. At the same time we learned that the edition of the book published in Cuba by Editora Política was out of print and might not be available again soon.

In the United States, where growing millions of our Spanish-speaking fellow workers come from all parts of the Americas, to have the book in English but not Spanish would have been unthinkable. Even more so on the eve of the 40th anniversary of Playa Girón. At every garment factory, at every packinghouse, at every street-corner table, at every college where Pathfinder books are sold, this is a moment like no other to explain why socialist revolution, not imperialist globalization, is and will continue to be the only way forward for humanity. It is a moment like no other to use the example of the men and women of Cuba to show that we can forge the kind of leadership necessary, and prove that "sí, se puede."

Our needs coincided, and the result was the decision to produce the book we are launching here today. It was accomplished in record time through the volunteer work of more than 200 Pathfinder supporters around the world who collaborate through the Internet to prepare our books for printing.

The donation of some 300 copies of



Granma

**Cuban artillery in action at the Bay of Pigs, April 1961. In Washington's first military defeat in the Americas, Waters said, "Cuba's revolutionary militias, together with the fledgling Revolutionary Armed Forces recently born out of the victorious Rebel Army of the Sierra, crushed the counterrevolutionary forces armed, trained and deployed by Washington."**

*Haciendo historia* does not come from Pathfinder. As a small, communist publishing house that today loses money on virtually every title we publish, we have no such resources. These books come from the same place that Pathfinder receives its subsidy. From garment, and textile, and auto, and packinghouse workers, from students and miners, from struggling family farmers, from hundreds of such individuals in the United States and other countries who have for almost a decade contributed to the Books for Cuba fund of the *Militant* and *Perspectiva Mundial*. This is the same fund that makes it possible for Pathfinder to be present at events here in Cuba such as the Havana International Book Fair, to make donations to dozens of libraries and institutions here, and sometimes to sell books in Cuba at prices that make them affordable.

The same workers and youth—from Chicago to Sydney, from Montreal to London and Stockholm—who sell these books at factory gates and university campuses, and who place them in bookstores across the country; the volunteers whose efforts make possible the production and reprinting of

Pathfinder books—these are the women and men who offered their labor and emptied their pockets to assure that these books, these weapons of another kind, would find their way into the hands of an international vanguard defending the first socialist revolution in our hemisphere.

It is a great pleasure to be here today to present this donation on behalf of these contributors. Doing so is not primarily an act of solidarity, however indispensable that quality is as an attribute of our class; it is something we must do in order to act effectively where we live, work, and fight, day in and day out. "Those who are not capable of fighting for others will never be able to fight for themselves," as Fidel expressed it. There can be no proletarian internationalist vanguard in the United States or anywhere else in the world that does not act on this principle, as Cuban revolutionists have done throughout the entire history of their struggle.

In that spirit, we hope you will accept these books as an expression of respect and appreciation from your co-combatants.

## Cuban generals attend book donation event

BY JONATHAN SILBERMAN  
AND MARTÍN KOPPEL

HAVANA—"On behalf of the Association of Combatants of the Cuban Revolution, I want to thank you for the donation of *Haciendo historia*," said Gustavo Chui Beltrán, a brigadier general in Cuba's Revolutionary Armed Forces, at a special event

here February 7 as part of the Havana International Book Fair at the historic San Carlos de la Cabaña Fortress.

Chui Beltrán, who was speaking on behalf of the association's leadership, was responding to the donation of 300 copies of Pathfinder's newly published Spanish-language edition of *Making History: Interviews with Four Generals of Cuba's Revolutionary Armed Forces*.

The donation was made possible by contributions to the *Militant's* Books for Cuba Fund. The Association of Combatants of the Cuban Revolution (ACRC) plans to make a copy of the book available to every single one of its municipal groups to help them in their work.

The organization, founded in 1994, brings together more than 330,000 Cubans who have taken part in revolutionary battles from the 1930s to today. Chui Beltrán, for example, joined the struggle to overthrow the U.S.-backed Batista dictatorship that culminated in the 1959 revolutionary victory. He later served in internationalist missions in Angola, where, from 1975 through 1991, Cuban volunteers joined with Angolan forces to defeat the invading South African army of the apartheid regime.

A central task of the combatants' association is to bring their own individual and collective experiences as revolutionists alive for a new generation in Cuba being won to the socialist revolution.

Besides Chui Beltrán, speakers at the event where the seven boxes of books were turned

over to the Cuban combatants were Mary-Alice Waters, president of Pathfinder Press, and Brig. Gen. Harry Villegas. Also on the speakers platform were brigadier generals Delsa Esther Puebla and Sergio Pérez Lezcano. The meeting was chaired by Martín Koppel, editor of the *Militant* and *Perspectiva Mundial*, the two publications that organize the Books for Cuba Fund that made the donation possible.

The Association's delegation at the event was composed of 23 members, including seven generals of Cuba's Revolutionary Armed Forces, all of them members of the national leadership of the ACRC. In addition to the four already mentioned, they included brigadier generals Orlando Kindelán, Rafael Moracén Limonta, and Alfonso Zaya.

In her remarks to the meeting Waters explained the political weight of the Cuban revolution in the world (see Waters's talk on the facing page), and how *Haciendo historia* and *Making History* are a weapon for working people and revolutionary-minded youth seeking to understand the strengths of the Cuban revolution and apply those lessons in their own struggles.

"In the United States the U.S. government is waging a fierce campaign against our country and is distorting the truth about our revolution," said Chui Beltrán. "We value the efforts by those in the United States who tell the truth about our revolution." He expressed appreciation for the fact that there are communist workers in the United States carrying out the revolutionary political work "of Marxism, of internationalism."

Pointing to how the funds for the donation of *Haciendo historia* were raised, the Cuban general added, "We are grateful for the contributions of workers in the United States who give part of their wages to make this donation possible."

Chui Beltrán added that he expected that

Continued on page 14



Militant photos (clockwise from top) by Greg McCartan, Janet Roth, and Ruth Cheney

Above, worker in Pathfinder printshop sets up offset press for Spanish-language edition of *Communist Manifesto*. Above right, socialist workers in New Zealand promote Pathfinder books and socialist periodicals at mobilization for Maori national pride at Waitangi, February 1999. Right, Pathfinder Reprint Project volunteers in Oakland meet in 1998 to organize work of converting Pathfinder titles into digital files—allowing shorter and more economical print runs, among other advantages. The same workers and youth who sell Pathfinder books, and whose efforts make possible the production and reprinting of these books, contributed to the Books For Cuba Fund to "assure that these books would find their way into the hands of the international vanguard defending the first socialist revolution in our hemisphere," said Waters.



Right, Pathfinder Reprint Project volunteers in Oakland meet in 1998 to organize work of converting Pathfinder titles into digital files—allowing shorter and more economical print runs, among other advantages. The same workers and youth who sell Pathfinder books, and whose efforts make possible the production and reprinting of these books, contributed to the Books For Cuba Fund to "assure that these books would find their way into the hands of the international vanguard defending the first socialist revolution in our hemisphere," said Waters.

# How defeat of Jim Crow strengthened unions

As part of celebrating Black History Month, the *Militant* is reprinting the excerpt below, taken from "A new stage of revolutionary working-class politics," a 1979 report published in *The Changing Face of U.S. Politics: Working-Class Politics and the Trade Unions* by Jack Barnes. In this section, Barnes discusses the organizing drive and strike in 1979 by United Steelworkers Local 8888 at the Newport News shipyard in Virginia. Copyright © 1994 by Pathfinder Press, reprinted by permission. Subheadings are by the *Militant*.

BY JACK BARNES

The Newport News battle tells us a lot

about the effects of the civil rights movement, the role of the Black struggle. It's a big mistake to look at what happened in the South over the past twenty years in too narrow a framework. It's not just that some important civil rights were won, narrowly construed.

There were elements of a social revolution in the South; Jim Crow was smashed. The South today is more desegregated than many of the big northern industrial states; studies have shown that.

This was a big victory for our entire class, Black and white. It means that there has been a sort of leveling-out process in some of the conditions of the class struggle

throughout the country. The South is more like the rest of the country than ever before. The big difference today is not the Jim Crow system and all the social, political, and economic features that flowed from that. That was the big difference from the defeat of Reconstruction through the 1960s.

## South still less organized than North

The big difference today is that the southern working class is still much less unionized than in the North. That is one of the legacies of Jim Crow, and the class-collaborationist policies of the labor bureaucracy. But, as Newport News showed, the battles that demolished Jim Crow have created

much more favorable conditions for solving this important remaining difference as well. It's a big challenge confronting American labor—and the entire union movement will be fighting from a position of weakness until it is met.

A great deal was changed in the South by the civil rights movement. The consciousness of the working class was dramatically changed. Not only Black, but also white workers became more capable of moving in a class-conscious direction; their attitudes were profoundly altered. They became more capable of seeing their common class interests with Black workers—which is absolutely necessary to move forward. There was a rise in the self-confidence of the Black workers.

The composition of the workforce changed, as more and more Blacks fought their way into industry. There has also been a rise in the number of women workers, like everywhere else. Finally, there is a lot more industry in the South today. In addition to the textile and other traditional southern industry, there are more auto plants, steel mills, electrical assembly plants, rubber factories, and so on.

The origins of the [Local] 8888 organizing drive directly reflected these important changes in the South. The vanguard was made up overwhelmingly of Black workers inside the yard. They sensed what these changes meant. They sized up how they could take advantage of these changes to put together a new struggle, in a new way, and with broader forces—white and Black workers, men and women. They took the initiative to draw the USWA [United Steelworkers of America] into the fight.

## Working-class solidarity

The Newport News workers also learned something about the importance of solidarity. Although the support they got from unionists around the country fell far short of the potential had the USWA officialdom energetically pursued it, the workers nonetheless got a taste of what solidarity can mean.

They also got a taste of what the bureaucracy will never mean by solidarity. They never mean solidarity inside the labor movement or with the oppressed. The bureaucrats' solidarity is with the capitalist government. They try to teach the workers to look to the government, to look to the National Labor Relations Board, to look to some mediator, to look to the courts. That's what USWA president Lloyd McBride and the entire USWA officialdom tried to drum into the heads of the 8888 workers.

But from their own experiences with the cops, the capitalist politicians, the courts, and the NLRB, the Newport News workers began learning something about where they must really look for allies, and why. The process is just beginning. It's still being thought through. It's not all totally understood. There are still hopes that the courts or the Carter administration will come through with some real assistance.

But the question is posed right out in the open. This, too, presents the bureaucracy with difficulties. George Meany personally sent letters to AFL-CIO affiliates telling them to hold no Newport News solidarity activities without an explicit go-ahead from the USWA officialdom. The deliberate intent of this was to put the kibosh on solidarity, including in cities where union support meetings were already in the planning stages.

McBride gave his infamous press conference where he said there had been a "tactical blunder," an unfortunate misunderstanding. Some people, McBride said, were incorrectly portraying the Newport News strike as part of a crusade to organize the South.

"I don't look on this as a crusade," McBride insisted. "We are not interested in broadening the dispute beyond our efforts to get a contract."

But without a contract to organize the South, it will be much more difficult to get a contract. That's another lesson the Newport News workers are learning. They have everything to gain, and nothing to lose, from projecting their fight as a struggle for workers throughout the South and throughout the country.

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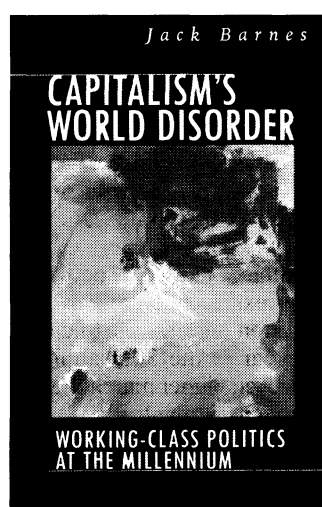
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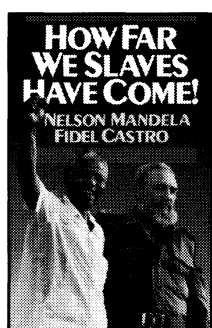
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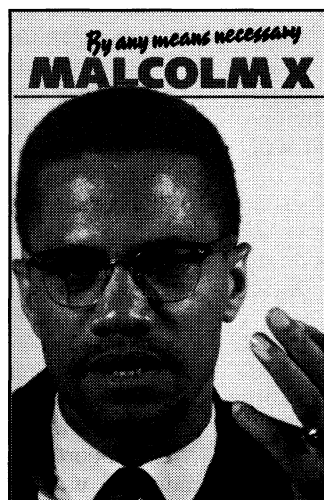
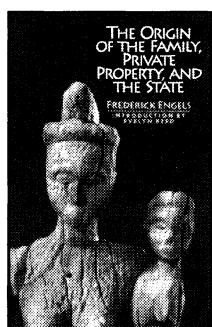
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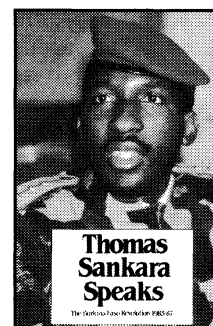
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# Derry action demands truth about massacre

Continued from front page

vember. Civilian witnesses to the massacre have begun to give testimony, which is screened live in the town's Guildhall and in the Bloody Sunday Center run by relatives.

Other events to commemorate the massacre and press demands for justice included a rally in London January 20 and a meeting attended by 250 in Derry a week later entitled, "The lessons of the Irish hunger strikes."

## Civil rights struggle

Sinn Fein leader Francie Molloy reminded the rally in London that the demands of the civil rights movement were for "a house, a job, and the right to vote—not much in a civil society. The Six-County statelet could not give in to those demands and it still cannot recognize the votes of republicans as equal to those of unionists." The 1972 Derry march was called to oppose internment without trial of thousands of civil rights and republican activists by Britain in August 1971.

"Tony Blair still protects the guilty," Molloy said. "Yes, he set up an inquiry, but will he give up the guilty? We see the cover-ups, the dirty tricks, the informers, the undercover agents all planting their stories without producing the evidence."

The lack of confidence in the new commission and the British government was repeated in many speeches at the rally. This is because over the past year London has granted soldiers involved immunity from prosecution; given the Ministry of Defence a Public Immunity Certificate that it can use to withhold information on grounds of "national security"; and announced that all but five rifles used in the massacre have been destroyed.

And recently, a statement from a British MI5 security agent code-named "Infliction" was submitted to the inquiry alleging that Martin McGuinness "has admitted he'd fired the first shot on Bloody Sunday," backing up long-standing British government claims that an Irish Republican Army (IRA) gunman fired first on that day in 1972, prompting army retaliation. This so-called evidence was subsequently discredited by former MI5 officer David Shayler who worked in the counter IRA section. Both Shayler and McGuinness are slated to testify before the Saville commission.

McGuinness said at the annual Bloody Sunday memorial lecture in Derry January 26, that like many, he is "skeptical and suspicious about the ability of the inquiry to establish the truth." McGuinness is an elected member of the Northern Ireland Assembly and its minister of education.

"Elements within the British military and political establishments," McGuinness said, "are attempting to ensure that even if the inquiry concludes that all of those murdered and wounded on Bloody Sunday were totally innocent civilians, nothing will emerge to point the finger at those responsible for planning, authorizing, and executing the strategy adopted in Derry 29 years ago."

Speaking of the dead and wounded of Bloody Sunday, McGuinness stated, "We actually diminish their memories by only referring to them as victims.... The dead and wounded, as well as all of those other thousands of people who marched on that and many other days against injustice were unselfish, courageous Irish people. They were

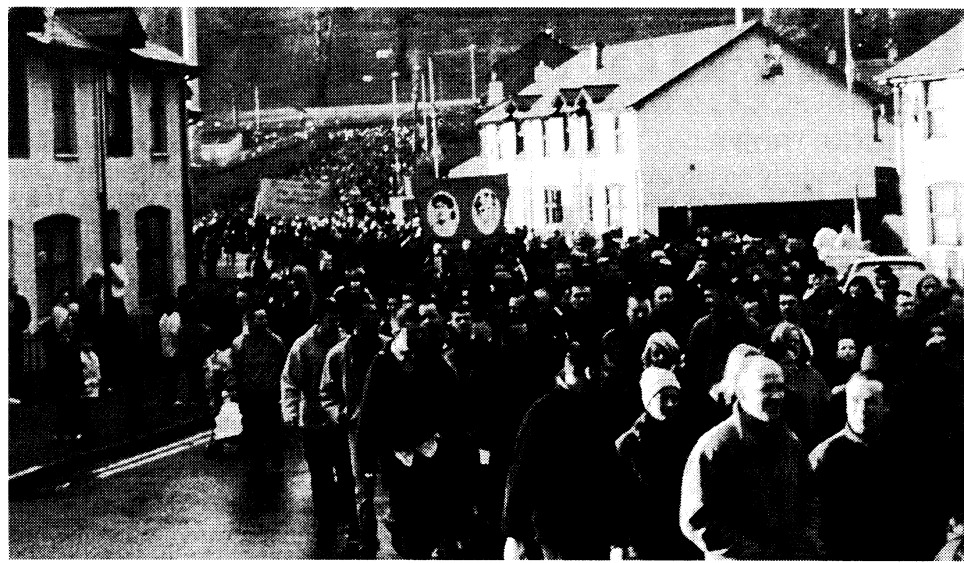
heroes. We always remember them with pride. They made a very conscious decision that internment was wrong...and that they could not just ignore it."

Michael McKinney, a brother of slain civil rights fighter William McKinney, spoke at the rally for the Bloody Sunday campaign. McKinney said the campaign had exposed enough facts to challenge the miscarriages of justice in the 1972 Widgery tribunal. But he condemned the refusal of the Ministry of Defence to testify, and the destruction and concealment of evidence, including state-held photographs and army guns used in the shootings. McKinney appealed to the crowd to continue campaigning. "Just because we've got the inquiry," he said, "don't assume the fight is over."

Joe McKinney, another brother of murdered William McKinney, marched in the 1972 protest and will testify at the inquiry. The British government is trying "to diminish the whole truth," he said in an interview. "How can they say that the MOD [Ministry of Defence] and the government are not responsible? Soldiers don't just make up orders for themselves. American soldiers in Vietnam and soldiers sent to Kosova did things under orders from higher up. The soldiers on Bloody Sunday carried out orders from the highest level of the state and that includes Prime Minister Edward Heath."

Referring to government pledges that soldiers will have immunity from prosecution, Joe McKinney said, "I think the soldiers responsible should be prosecuted. Even if they don't go to prison they should be publicly labeled as murderers. The same should happen to Edward Heath. He gave the orders. We should demand government papers are made available from the joint security chiefs in Stormont and from Westminster."

Martina Anderson, a former republican prisoner from Derry, was a keynote speaker at the London event. The British govern-



Militant/Roy Inglee

**March of 12,000 in Derry January 28 commemorating Bloody Sunday. "We're determined to get out the truth" about the massacre, said one participant.**

ment, Anderson said, "sought through the tactics of murder and mayhem to use Bloody Sunday as the anvil on which to break the spirit of nationalist resistance in Derry, and by extension across the whole of Ireland. But the military and political establishment never learns the lesson. This strengthened our commitment to struggle against the might of the state."

In addition to being part of a week of activities leading up to the January 30 march, the Derry meeting launched a year of events to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the 1981 hunger strikes by Irish freedom fighters locked in British jails in which 10 hunger strikers died demanding political status from the British government. A demonstration around the anniversary is planned for Belfast on May 12 with other actions later in Glasgow and London.

At the meeting, a panel of political prisoners included Brendan McFarlane from the Long Kesh prison. He said that the hunger strikers had a profound impact on the subsequent course of the nationalist struggle, including the street mobilizations organized by support committees. "That's one of the lessons we can learn. There is a role for everyone in the struggle. However insignificant it may seem, it's all building blocks in

the struggle, whatever age you are."

Drawing parallels with the Bloody Sunday campaign, he added, "There's a sense of achievement, confidence, and involvement when we fight for justice." He appealed for people to get involved in current activities as part of the continuing fight.

Other speakers at the Bloody Sunday weekend events reported actions against ongoing attacks and harassment by the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC), the British troops, and their collusion with rightist loyalist terror gangs. They spoke of their commitment to continue the fight to disband the RUC and for Britain to withdraw from Ireland.

Alana Burke, a speaker at the London event, said she was 18 years old on Bloody Sunday and was severely injured when crushed by an armored vehicle. She said she has only recently felt confident to give evidence to the inquiry, and that speaking publicly is a new experience for her. Later at the demonstration in Derry she told the *Militant*, "Next year is the 30th anniversary. We'll have an even bigger march then. We're determined to get out the truth."

*Celia Pugh and Antonis Partasis work in electronics plants in London.*

## Socialist in race for mayor of Los Angeles

BY AL DUNCAN

LOS ANGELES—Supporters of the Socialist Workers campaign of Wendy Lyons for mayor of Los Angeles collected 1,200 signatures of working people here in two weeks to place Lyons, a garment worker, on the ballot for the April 10 primary election.

The socialist candidate turned in 1,000 of those signatures—the maximum allowed—to the city clerk's office February 5 to be checked against the roster of register voters. To get on the ballot in Los Angeles 500 signatures of registered voters are required. The city clerk's office is to certify Lyons's ballot status within 10 days.

In launching the campaign Lyons and her supporters campaigned to get out the truth about the crisis facing workers and farmers in the state due to the price gouging by the energy monopolies and the state-sponsored bailout of the electric utilities.

According to campaign supporters who collected the signatures, a big majority of people signed the petitions in response to the campaign's demands to open the books of the energy monopolies, to nationalize

them without compensation, and to run them as public utilities in the interests of working people.

Lyons stated, "This crisis is the latest example of the fact that capitalism, as it heads deeper into crisis, will bring with it devastating consequences for working people around the world. Our campaign poses a fighting, revolutionary alternative to what the superwealthy ruling minority and the parties that represent them have in store for workers and farmers."

"Our campaign," Lyons said, "is getting a serious reception to our central proposition: that working people can and must mount a revolutionary struggle to replace the capitalist government with one of our own, opening up the battle to eliminate capitalism and construct a socialist society."

Lyons already has a full campaign schedule and has pledged to continue to speak out in the interests of workers and farmers and in opposition to the Democratic and Republican parties that represent the wealthy ruling class.

[As we go to press the City Clerks office in Los Angeles informed the Socialist Work-

ers campaign that Lyons has met all the requirements to be placed on the April ballot. Please see "Look us up" on page 12 for information on how to contact the Lyons for mayor campaign.]

## Union wins victory over Metropolitan Opera

BY HILDA CUZCO

The Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees union Local 100 registered a victory in the U.S. Court of Appeals in Manhattan on February 2. The court overturned an injunction barring the union from criticizing the Metropolitan Opera in its drive to organize the 95 restaurant workers employed there.

Restaurant workers are pitted against the opera company's subcontractor, Food Associates, in their two-year drive to win a union. The company insists that union recognition must come about as a result of a representation election, rather than the collection of union cards from a majority of workers. A federal district court in Manhattan fined the union \$10,000 for allegedly harassing the opera house, and issued an injunction to bar the union from subjecting the company or anybody associated with it to "fraudulent" or "defamatory" criticism. Slogans chanted by workers at demonstrations, such as "Shame on you" and "No more lies" were cited in the ruling.

The appeals court stated that Judge Loretta Preska of the federal district court had been wrong in issuing the injunction, calling it "an improper and overbroad prior restraint," according to the *New York Times*. "Prior restraints are the most serious and the least tolerable infringement on First Amendment Rights," stated the three judges in their unanimous verdict.

The union, on the other hand, expressed satisfaction with the ruling and said they will proceed with the unionization drive. Brooks Bitterman, Local 100's research director, told the media the court ruling will expedite the organizing efforts. So far 76 of the 95 workers have signed union authorization cards.

## Paris march demands wage increase, jobs

Continued from front page

of 20,000 francs.

In addition to fighting for a wage increase, hospital workers are involved in a struggle to make the government restore 10 billion francs in hospital budget cuts and to create 12,000 new jobs.

They organized several months of strikes and demonstrations at the beginning of 2000 that forced the government to agree to these demands. But the unions have had to call another national day of strikes and demonstrations, slated for February 6, as part of a fight to get implementation of the agreement obtained last year.

The support for the wage fight and the January 28 demonstrations has wide backing within the working class. "These strikes

and demonstrations are a good thing," said Patrick Grenier in Marseille, who had joined the demonstrations in defense of the retirement age. Grenier is an electrician at the state-owned SNCM (National Corse Mediterranean Company), the main ferry company between Corsica and the mainland.

Unions at the SNCM, which is not formally covered by the public workers' wage agreement, didn't call out workers for the January 25 actions, which Grenier regretted. "We have to defend ourselves," he said, "and fight for our wages, which are miserable." According to another SNCM worker, the average wage there is 8,000 francs a month. "I hope actions will continue in the weeks to come."

Meanwhile, the employers' federation,

the Movement of French Enterprises, which has been demanding that unions agree to the requirement that retirees in the private sector must work 45 years instead of the current 40 in order to receive a full pension, is scheduled to meet February 9 with the unions.

However, after the massive show of strength January 25, all five union federations are adamant in refusing, for now, to agree to an increase in the retirement age.

*Derek Jeffers is a worker and member of the General Confederation of Labor at the Peugeot plant in Poissy. Claude Bleton, a primary school teacher in Soisy and Marc Kinzel, a maritime worker in the port of Marseille, contributed to this article.*

# Pan Am trial is latest U.S. assault on Libya

BY MAGGIE TROWE

Relying entirely on circumstantial evidence, a Scottish panel of judges January 31 found Libyan Abdelbaset Ali Mohamed al-Megrahi guilty of bombing Pan Am Flight 103 in 1988, and sentenced him to life in prison. He is expected to appeal the ruling. The court released a second Libyan defendant, Al-Amin Khalifa Fhimah.

U.S. president George Bush the same day announced that Washington's sanctions against Libya will continue, and pressed the Libyan government to "accept responsibility" for the loss of the plane and all aboard and to pay compensation to the families of those who died in the crash.

The plane exploded over Lockerbie, Scotland, resulting in the deaths of 270 people. The trial, which cost \$200 million, was conducted in the Netherlands by a Scottish court. The U.S. government has played a key role in the proceedings from the start.

The trial is part of a long history of hostility toward Libya by U.S. imperialism. In 1986, the administration of President Ronald Reagan, alleging that Libya was responsible for the bombing of a nightclub in West Berlin in which two U.S. military personnel died, imposed unilateral sanctions, banning nearly all trade and financial interactions with Libya. The same year, the U.S. government carried out a bombing raid on Tripoli, explicitly to punish Libya. The raid killed 37 people, including Libyan leader Mu'ammarr Gadhafi's daughter.

Washington has branded Libya a terrorist country since 1979. The aggressive U.S. policy against Libya began when Gadhafi and other lower echelon officers, supported by the majority of workers and farmers, overthrew the U.S.-backed monarchy in 1969. The following year Libya nationalized all foreign banks and oil reserves, until then in large part controlled by Standard Oil and Shell. The Libyans forced the U.S. to vacate its huge air force bastion and similarly expelled the British from their base. Gadhafi established alliances with nationalist Arab regimes and extended some support to the Palestinian struggle.

Since this time, the U.S. rulers have been looking for pretexts to regain the foothold they lost in the oil-rich country. One of Reagan's accusations against Gadhafi immediately after the 1986 bombardment of Tripoli was that Libya had provided military aid to revolutionary Nicaragua in its war against the U.S.-backed mercenary "contras."

For many months after the Pan Am plane

exploded, U.S. and British officials claimed that a group of Palestinians living in Germany were responsible for this act. Testimony by Federal Bureau of Investigation agent Harold Hendershot, a witness for the prosecution, revealed that the FBI went to some length to investigate this group. He repeatedly answered "I don't recall," when asked questions about the investigation.

Switching their target in November, 1991, Washington and London began accusing Megrahi and Fhimah, and by association, the Libyan government and Gadhafi, of being responsible for the crash. The U.S. rulers began building a case against the two based chiefly on testimony by Abdul Majid, a Libyan secret service agent who had become a double agent working for Washington in the summer of 1988.

The case took more than 10 years to come to trial. The U.S. and British governments insisted that the trial be held in Scotland. Libyan officials wanted it to take place in another country, supervised by the UN or the Arab League. In response to the Libyan government's refusal to surrender the accused men, the UN Security Council in 1992 imposed a worldwide ban on air travel and arms sales to Libya and placed restrictions on the presence of diplomats there.

In a March 1999 compromise agreement, which was supported by the Russian government and many Arab states, the Libyan government agreed to release the men into custody for trial in the Netherlands under Scottish law. The UN and the United Kingdom suspended sanctions at this point, though Washington kept theirs in place. The sanctions have dealt a heavy blow to Libya. In 1997, Libyan officials estimated the sanctions had cost the country \$23.5 billion.

Even with substantial collaboration with U.S. intelligence agencies, the Scottish prosecutors' case ended on a weak note. In a February 2 news analysis article entitled, "Lockerbie judges tied up threads to find guilt in circumstantial case," *New York Times* journalist Donald McNeil, Jr., wrote that the prosecution "knew its case was wholly circumstantial." In the verdict delivered by the three-judge panel, McNeil continued, "they tossed out much of the prosecution witnesses' evidence as false or questionable and said that the prosecution had failed to prove crucial elements, including the route that the bomb suitcase took."

With no reliable witnesses to draw on, the prosecution, by inference, sketched a picture of the two Libyans in Malta packing an explosive device enclosed in a radio into a

suitcase surrounded by clothing. The two then allegedly put the suitcase on a flight from Malta to Heathrow in London, where it was loaded onto Pan Am 103.

The judges pointed in their ruling first to the "fact" that Tony Gauci, the owner of Mary's House clothing store in Malta, identified Megrahi as the person who purchased the same kind of clothing allegedly packed in a suitcase with an explosive device. However, at the same time they pointed out that this "was not an unequivocal identification," as it was made long after the event. Gauci was uncertain at several points and had picked other people out of photo displays.

The judges also cited Megrahi's use of a false name and passport, his presence in Malta at the time of the alleged incident, and his association with electronics dealer, Edwin Bollier, from whom Libyan security agents had bought MST-13 timers similar to the one allegedly used to explode the aircraft. However, they noted that Bollier was "an untruthful and unreliable witness."

The judges completely dismissed the credibility of Abdul Majid, the prosecution's main witness who collaborated closely with the CIA and FBI. Majid—now a U.S. citizen—who was living for a decade with a new identity provided to him under a U.S. federal witness protection program, was described in 1991 by the CIA as "a shattered person," who "is certainly milking any of his contacts, including us, for whatever he can get." Majid claimed before a grand jury in the United States in 1991 that he is related to former king Idris of Libya, and that Gadhafi and the president of Malta were both part of a Masonic conspiracy.

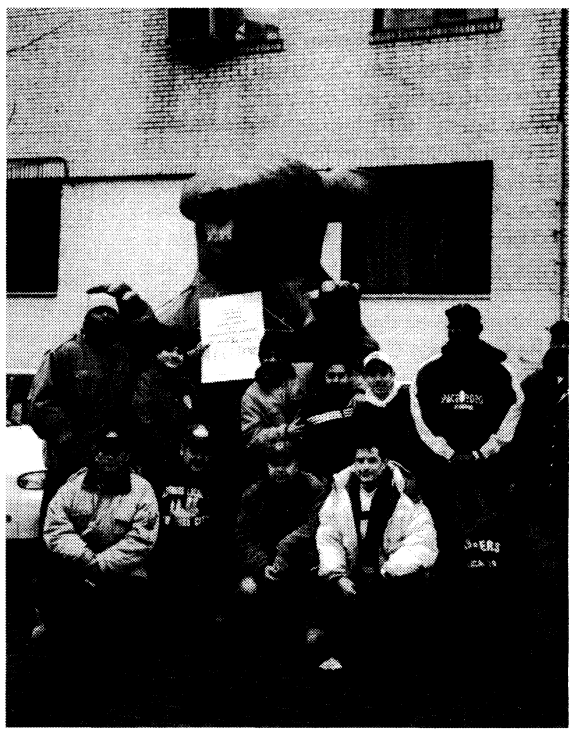
Once released, Fhimah returned to a hero's welcome in Libya, and was greeted by Gadhafi, who said the verdict "was under pressure from the Americans," and denounced Washington's demand that Libya take responsibility for the bombing and compensate the victims. Standing next to the ruins of his former home,

which was destroyed by the 1986 U.S. bombing, Gadhafi said in English, "If we speak about victims, we must speak about the victims of 1986." Gadhafi called for the U.S. to remove its sanctions.

Tensions between the U.S. government and its allies are evident in wake of the verdict. While Washington showed no sign of lifting sanctions, the *Financial Times* described London and the other European powers as being "eager to expand ties with the Libyan regime and accelerate business access to the Libyan market—in particular the underdeveloped oil and gas industry."

Libya's record of resisting Washington's attempts to control it through economic and military bullying and bribery, however, makes it unlikely that the U.S. rulers will readily lift the sanctions or cease the demonization of Mu'ammarr Gadhafi.

## NY unionists protest nonunion contractor



Militant/Patrick O'Neill  
Members of Laborers International Local 79 picket construction site February 5 where nonunion labor was hired to do construction work on apartment building on Manhattan's westside.

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### AUSTRALIA

**Sydney:** 1st Flr, 176 Redfern St., Redfern NSW 2016. Mailing address: P.O. Box K879,

Haymarket Post Office, NSW 1240. Tel: 02-9690-1533.

E-mail: 106450.2216@compuserve.com

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### ICELAND

**Reykjavik:** Klapparstíg 26. Mailing address: P. Box 0233, IS 121 Reykjavik. Tel: 552 5502. E-mail: milpth@mmedia.is

### NEW ZEALAND

**Auckland:** La Gonda Arcade, 203 Karangahape Road. Postal address: P.O. Box 3025. Tel: (9) 379-3075.

E-mail: milpath.auckland@actrix.gen.nz

**Christchurch:** Gloucester Arcade, 129 Gloucester St. Postal address: P.O. Box 13-969. Tel: (3) 365-6055.

E-mail: pathfinder.militant@paradise.net.nz

### SWEDEN

**Stockholm:** Vikingagatan 10 (T-bana St Eriksplan). Postal code: S-113 42. Tel: (08) 31 69 33. E-mail: 100416.2362@compuserve.com



**A bit shaky?**—The *Times* of London reported that the United Kingdom Foreign Office was “alarmed” over a slated interview

ity. Castro, Che Guevara and all that have become a great social and political significance among students in the West.”

**Fidel might mention Cuba's free education?**—England's Commons has been advised that many youth from poor families are reluctant to go to college because they fear the debt incurred.

**Crisis? What crisis?**—“There's no energy crisis in the energy industry where soaring prices for oil and natural gas sent profits through the roof in the fourth quarter. ExxonMobil Corp.'s earnings set a record for any company anywhere. ExxonMobil said its earnings surged to \$5.2 billion, a quarterly record for a U.S. company. Its full year's net

profit hit \$16.9 billion, also a record.”—*Los Angeles Times*.

**...meanwhile**—Major power distributors like California's Pacific Gas & Electric get their energy supplies from bigger pirates, like ExxonMobil. PG&E has a workforce of 17,000. An estimated 80 percent have sunk their savings in company shares as a retirement plan. Currently the stocks have lost two-thirds of their value.

**A 'soft landing'?**—Some headlines from a day in the *L.A. Times* business section: “Chrysler to cut 26,000 and close 6 plants”; “Xerox posts another quarterly loss, will cut 4,000 jobs”; “AT&T closes book on tough year as profit plunges in 4th quarter”; “Gateway CEO quits

abruptly amid PC slump.”

**P.S.** There was a “bright spot” among those headlines: “Natural gas firm, El Paso Energy, reports 57 percent rise in profits.”

**Apparently, not everyone's worried**—We chuckled a while back on the building of a giant cruise ship with megasuite living and office quarters for those who desired a permanent floating residence and workplace. Floor to ceiling windows, private porches, etc. \$2 million to \$5 million. Now we learn that 80 to 110 units have already been sold. A perhaps claustrophobic chap bought two of them.

**Ever hear of prevention?**—The feds and the American Medical As-

sociation warned the health industry to be more alert to the dangers of the illnesses caused by contaminated food. They estimate 76 million people are made ill each year by food-borne microbes. Of these 325,000 are hospitalized and 5,000 die. Doctors can call the AMA for a free information kit to keep them posted.

**L.A., where the taking is easy**—Recent disclosures of beatings, killings, and frame-ups by members of the Los Angeles Police Dept. have not impaired the earning power of Chief Bernard Parks. Ranking city officials, including Parks, were given 5 percent wage hikes by Mayor Richard Riordan. Already the highest paid city official, Parks now has a yearly take of \$257,116.



Harry Ring

with Fidel Castro by TV personality David Frost. It cited a Ministry spokesman, who said, “There seems to be a danger that David Frost might, in interviewing Castro, concentrate more on the mythology of Castro—or inspiration to the revolting students—than on the real-

## The capitalist business cycle and politics of economics

Printed below are excerpts from “Imperialism's March toward Fascism and War,” a report by Socialist Workers Party national secretary Jack Barnes that was adopted by the SWP's August 1994 national convention. The entire text of the article can be found in *New Internationalist* no. 10. Copyright © 1994 by 408 Printing and Publishing Corp., reprinted by permission. Subheadings are by the *Militant*.

BY JACK BARNES

If you read or listen to the business news, you'll hear the phrase: “Sears took a ‘one-time charge’ of \$1.3 million this quarter.” Or Philip Morris, or Borden, or NCR, or others. That is simply an accounting phrase for the consequences of mounting capitalist overproduction. It registers the large-scale devaluation and destruction of capital-turning products into cut-rate commodities, as owners seek to clear their invento-

industrialized countries. Barriers to the expansion of capital continue to proliferate, the report said, although not in those words. In this situation, it advised that the road to profits was what the employing class calls “increased productivity”—that is, squeezing fewer workers to produce more value at lower wages, while cutting down other production costs as well.

**Downsizing and pressure on profit rate**

All that downsizing accomplishes in and of itself, however, is to put greater pressure on the rate of profit, as the bosses seek to make more off the labor of relatively fewer workers. It also poses a sharper threat to outstanding loans and to assets of all kinds whose paper values are bloated. What the capitalists call downsizing limits the expansion of the mass of surplus value and increases as a percentage of capital that portion that Marx called constant capital—the portion laid out for everything other than wages for labor power. And that puts further downward pressure on profit rates. It's not only an important theoretical question; it's one with utmost practical implications right now....

We should always remember that big political explosions in the world—not just stock market collapses, banking crises, sudden shortages, and so on—will continue to trigger economic and social catastrophes in the capitalist world.

In the imperialist epoch above all, as Lenin and Trotsky taught us, politics is concentrated economics; economic phenomena don't simply run their course irrespective of class struggles, wars, and revolutions. Major shifts in the curve of capitalist development have been triggered by developments outside the economy per se, or rather, outside the lawful operations of the capitalist business cycle. Neither we nor anyone else has any timetables. No one can know beforehand what combination of economic and political developments may set off such a catastrophe—although history gives us good reason to believe that wars and preparations for war will be a weighty element.

We have nothing to take back from the SWP's 1988 resolution and the accompanying popular pamphlet, *An Action Program to Confront the Coming Economic Crisis*. Capitalism is becoming more and more vulnerable to a worldwide crisis that will bring in its wake mass unemployment, ruination of working farmers, homelessness, destruction of small businesses, and impoverishment on a scale not experienced since the 1930s. It will devastate the Third World, the majority of whose toilers have already faced a deterioration of economic and social conditions for almost a quarter century. And it will open a new stage in the social and political crisis of the imperialist countries.

Millions of working people today believe that such a prospect is a distinct possibility. They are already being shaken by the instability inherent in the evolution of world capitalism. This explains the receptivity to revolutionary literature even before the onset of such a social catastrophe or major class battles.

The “lack of stability,” wrote Bolshevik leader Leon Trotsky in the 1920s, “the uncertainty of what tomorrow will bring in the personal life of every worker, is the most revolutionary factor of the epoch in which we live.” The “tranquil mode of existence” of the labor officialdom for nearly a quarter



Assembly line workers at DaimlerChrysler's factory due to be closed in Toluca, Mexico. “Capitalism is becoming more and more vulnerable to a worldwide crisis that will bring in its wake mass unemployment, ruination of working farmers, homelessness, destruction of small businesses, and impoverishment on a scale not experienced since the 1930s,” writes Barnes in “Imperialism's March toward Fascism and War.”

century prior to World War I, Trotsky wrote, had “also exerted its influence upon the psychology of a broad layer of workers who are better off.”

All that was changed, Trotsky explained, by the economic and social crisis of capitalism that the rival ruling classes of North

America, Europe, and Japan had failed to resolve through the worldwide slaughter they had inflicted on humanity. The resulting “absence of stability drives the most imperturbable worker out of equilibrium,” Trotsky wrote. “It is the revolutionary motor power.”

## —25 AND 50 YEARS AGO—



February 20, 1976

A major challenge to the entrenched bureaucracy of the United Steelworkers of America is shaping up behind Ed Sadlowski, the insurgent director of USWA District 31.

Sadlowski won national prominence in 1974 when he wrested the directorship of the Chicago-Gary district, the largest in the USWA, from the bureaucracy's handpicked candidate.

Now Sadlowski has launched a nationwide movement called Steelworkers Fight Back. Its avowed purpose is to restore democratic, rank-and-file control over the steelworkers union so it can fight effectively for the needs of working people.

This campaign inside the 1.4 million-member steelworkers union will have repercussions throughout the entire trade union movement.

It is a fight that deserves support from all steelworkers and other unionists who want to see—in Sadlowski's words—“a tough, democratic labor movement.”

In a widely circulated letter appealing for support to Steelworkers Fight Back, Sadlowski describes the purpose of the new movement:

“We are determined to eliminate the kind of tuxedo unionism some of our leaders have practiced in the past. We want to give our union back to the membership; and we're determined to make our union the kind of progressive political force its founders intended it to be.”



February 19, 1951

The auto barons are employing the lowliest scum of the underworld to intimidate and brutally assault union men and women and wreck the unions, it was revealed last week in Detroit hearings conducted by the Senate Crime Investigating Committee (Kefauver Committee).

In the course of this Senate rackets-investigation, the “respectable” auto industrialists have been linked with a plot to protect their profits by hiring gangsters to commit violence against workers.

Not since the LaFollette Civil Liberties Committee investigation in 1937 has the truth been told about the unremitting war of the auto corporations against unionism. At those hearings it was revealed that in 1936 the big corporations, including 28 automobile companies, spent \$80,000,000 on the labor spy racket.

The Kefauver Committee held only a hasty two-day open hearing. But this was sufficient to expose the conspiracy between the Briggs Manufacturing Company and a gang of thugs hired in 1945 to beat up union workers.

The 1945 beatings suffered by the pioneer auto union builder Genora Dollinger, Michigan Trotskyist leader, and three other union militants, have now been definitely traced to the Briggs Company which in 1945 hired a notorious gangster for anti-union work under cover of a million dollar contract to collect scrap.

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# End sanctions against Libya

The reaction of U.S. president George Bush to the conclusion of the trial of two Libyans accused of causing the explosion of Pan Am Flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland, in 1988, makes it clear that Washington's 31-year aggression against the people of the North African nation will not abate.

The judges in the trial, which was carried out by a Scottish court in the Netherlands, convicted Abdelbaset Ali Mohmed al-Megrahi solely on flimsy circumstantial evidence, and let Al-Amin Khalifa Fhimah go free. It was hardly a triumphant finale for imperialism that the prosecutors, in spite of aid from the U.S. FBI and CIA, were unable to present any witnesses to testify that either Megrahi or Fhimah had constructed a bomb or put it on the plane.

Washington, with London's help, has carried out a relentless campaign of slander, economic pressure, and military aggression against Libya since the uprising that overthrew the U.S.-backed monarch in 1969 forced the U.S. military to vacate its airbase there, and nationalized banks and oil companies owned by U.S. and European capitalists. In one fell swoop the U.S. capitalists lost a compliant regime, a protectorate where they could make large profits from petroleum and use its territory for a regional military base.

Washington's history of aggression against Libya includes not only the bombing of Tripoli, ordered by President Ronald Reagan in 1986, and economic sanctions, but also the demonization of Libyan leader Colonel Mu'ammarr Gadhafi, in the name of the fight against "terrorism."

But it is Washington that is guilty of carrying out state terror, not only in the bombing of Libya, but in the brutal assault and embargo against Iraq, which continues to this

day; in the bombing of Vieques, Puerto Rico; two wars against the people of Yugoslavia; and in the assaults and 40-year embargo against revolutionary Cuba.

Bush announced that U.S. sanctions will stay in place. He demanded that Libya accept responsibility for the Pan Am explosion and pay compensation to the families of the 270 victims. Washington has never offered an apology, let alone compensation, for its murderous 1986 assault on Libya.

The Clinton administration lumped Libya along with Iraq, Cuba, and North Korea as "rogue states." It is clear that Bush will continue to target Libya and other countries that don't kowtow to the interests of U.S. capital.

Bush's reaffirmation of an offensive stance toward Libya is of a piece with the administration's announced plans to build on the groundwork laid by Clinton to create a space-based missile system that will give Washington first-strike nuclear capability against its foes, and of the administration's stepped-up efforts to maintain sanctions against Iraq. This brutal imperialist foreign policy is an extension of the attack being waged at home against unions, the social wage, and democratic rights.

It is in the interests of workers and farmers around the world to defend Libya against the attacks on its sovereignty, call for Bush to drop the sanctions, and demand, "U.S. hands off Libya." Equally important is to get out the truth about Washington's history of violence and lies carried out against the world's toilers in the interests of the profits of a handful of capitalist families. Workers and farmers who are resisting the attacks dealt by the capitalists at home—layoffs, high fuel costs, and the erosion of the social wage—will be increasingly open to seeing that they have the same enemy as their brother and sister workers in countries such as Libya.

# UK troops out of Ireland

For decades the British government has sought to cover up its responsibility for the 1972 killing of the civil rights marchers in Derry who were shot down in cold blood by British troops.

London also tried to pin the blame for the massacre on the Irish freedom fighters, who remain steadfast in their struggle for a united, democratic Ireland. London hoped this murderous assault would help break the resistance of the Irish Catholic population of Northern Ireland, whose land has now been occupied by thousands of British soldiers for more than 30 years.

Being subjected to British rule and the tyranny of the pro-British loyalist forces, the Catholic population in Northern Ireland has been ghettoized, kept in a caste-like oppression, and subjected to martial-law repression. They suffer discrimination in all aspects of social and political life.

The rulers in the United Kingdom, however, underestimated in their calculations the determined resistance of Irish working people. The recent march of thousands of people in Derry is a measure of the continued resistance of the Republican movement, which also includes new generations of activists joining the struggle.

The Catholic population refuses get down on their knees or give up their demands for the truth to be told about Bloody Sunday and for an end to the British military oc-

cupation of the six counties of Northern Ireland.

Due to their failure to crush the struggle, combined with the weakening of the United Kingdom as a world imperialist power, London has been forced to recognize Sinn Fein, release scores of Irish Republicans from prison, and embark on a series of reforms aimed at keeping the six counties as part of the United Kingdom. At the same time, the reactionary Ulster Unionist bloc—upon which British rule over Northern Ireland has rested for decades—is disintegrating.

All defenders of democratic rights should extend a hand of solidarity to the Irish freedom struggle. Their determination to win justice for those murdered in the Bloody Sunday massacre deserves support from workers and farmers in every country.

Events can be organized to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the hunger strikes by Irish freedom fighters locked in British jails in which 10 hunger strikers died demanding political status from the UK government.

Working people around the world should join with Irish freedom fighters in their demands for a united, democratic Ireland and for British troops to get out of the country. London should respect the sovereignty and independence of the Irish people. The UK government should also come clean about the events of Jan. 30, 1972.

# Generals attend book donation event

Continued from page 9

those responsible for producing the book of "interviews with four historic generals of our revolution" would "continue to do more interviews and keep telling the truth about our revolution."

Gen. Harry Villegas, who also spoke, is one of the four generals interviewed in *Making History* and *Haciendo historia*. He highlighted the importance of the book in explaining the 1961 victory of Cuba's revolutionary militias and fledgling armed forces over a U.S.-organized mercenary invasion force at the Bay of Pigs.

He pointed to the interview with José Ramón Fernández as one of the field commanders of the victorious forces at the Bay of Pigs, whose 40th anniversary will be celebrated in April of this year. Along with Fernández, two other generals interviewed for *Haciendo historia*, Néstor López Cuba and Enrique Carreras, were among those distinguished for their combat leadership at Playa Girón, as the battle is known in Cuba.

Div. Gen. Carreras was responsible for sinking two of the invaders' transport ships, the *Houston* and *El Escondido*, as well as for shooting down two of the nine B-26 bombers felled by the Cuban forces. "Through this book we can see the Cuban pilots' courage, determination, and confidence in victory, in face of very adverse conditions as they confronted the mercenary air force," Villegas noted. "We can see how decisive these pilots were in sinking the ships of the invasion force and preventing a

successful culmination of their landing."

Villegas said *Haciendo historia* tells of the internationalist record of the Cuban revolution, such as the volunteer mission López Cuba served in Syria in 1973. "These pages," Villegas added, "also tell the story of how Cuban revolutionaries helped defend the integrity of the Republic of Angola, which culminated with the victory over apartheid by the progressive forces in the world. They helped protect the independence of Angola, win the independence of Namibia, and bring about the end of the odious apartheid regime" in South Africa.

Villegas himself fought with revolutionary leader Ernesto Che Guevara in the Congo in 1965 and in Bolivia in 1966-67, as well as serving several tours of duty in Angola.

Villegas said the firsthand accounts in *Haciendo historia* of Cuba's revolutionary struggles, from the Bay of Pigs to internationalist combat missions, will aid the ACRC in its "patriotic, military, and internationalist educational work of reaching new generations with the experiences the association's members have gone through. We can assure you this book will be much used in our libraries—by our combatants and their families—and in the political reinforcement of the Association of Combatants."

Following the presentations, several generals of the Revolutionary Armed Forces who are part of the Association's leadership picked up and carried off the boxes of *Haciendo historia* for its municipal groups across Cuba.

# Factionalism marks debate over Ashcroft

Continued from page 5

were before the new rules took place. Most also agreed on the major questions remaining, including what happens when the economy falls, and what happens to people when they use up their maximum five years of benefits." The article cites figures from the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities that estimate 700,000 families are worse off today than when the "welfare reform" act became law in 1996.

Bush is also pressing an assault on Social Security by calling for the creation of individual investment accounts and is proposing to weaken Medicare by making it rely much more heavily on private health plans. Both of these moves would undercut the two programs as government-funded entitlements guaranteed for all. A recent General Accounting Office report warned that the institution of the proposed individual investment accounts would cut the average Social Security benefit for disabled people from between 4 percent to 18 percent. About 7.5 million of the 45 million people on Social Security, or 17 percent, are disabled. They receive an already low average benefit of \$786 a month.

## Clinton pardons

Two hours before leaving office January 20 Clinton granted 140 pardons and commuted 36 sentences. The most controversy has been generated around the pardon of commodities trader Marc Rich who fled to Switzerland after being indicted on charges of income tax evasion and violating U.S. government price controls on oil in 1983. Rich's ex-wife Denise donated more than \$1 million to Democrats, including to Hillary Rodman Clinton's campaign for U.S. Senate. The Senate judiciary committee and the House government reform and oversight committee are expected to hold hearings on the Rich pardon this week.

One of those who appealed to Clinton on behalf of Rich was Shabtai Shavit, the former head of the Israeli intelligence service, the Mossad. "As the head of Mossad, we requested his assistance in looking for MIAs (missing in action) and help in rescue and evacuation of Jews from enemy countries," Shavit wrote. "Mr. Rich always agreed and used his extensive network of contacts in these countries to produce results sometimes beyond the expected."

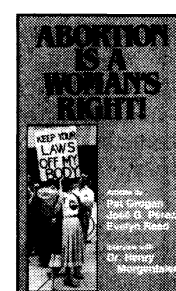
Clinton also came under attack for his decision to rent a \$650,000 a year office, taking up an entire floor at the Carnegie Hall Tower in central Manhattan. The federal government pays the rent for offices of former presidents. After a stir, Clinton announced his Presidential Library Foundation would pay part of the rent. And the Clintons were forced to agree to pay for \$85,966 of furniture, china, silver, and other items wealthy donors contributed to them to furnish their new houses.

Taking advantage of these excesses of the now former president, right-wing forces and some liberals have issued vitriolic articles with heavy antiwoman and anti-worker overtones. Dave Shiflett, in a column posted in the *National Review* web site, said that now that the Clintons are out of the White House both are seen as "two heaving sacks of White Trash." In an anti-worker attack, he said Clinton's "bearing is the result of an eat-beans-from-the-can, momma's-doin'-the-milkman Arkansas upbringing he just couldn't shake."

The *New York Times* hammered Rodham Clinton for accepting the gifts, saying it betrayed the state's "progressive senatorial tradition," and for opening herself to "Republicans accusing her of mimicking her husband's grasping approach to money and political favors." They called her decision to pay for some of the gifts an "important act of contrition" and encouraged her to "engage in an open discussion of her role in the commutation of sentences [by Clinton] for four Hasidic men from New Square, N.Y., who were serving time for embezzling funds from the federal government."

Part of this campaign has focused on the physical appearance of Rodman Clinton. Lloyd Grove from the *Washington Post* wrote that Clinton "has started wearing a rough-and-ready do that belongs on a soccer mom. The dry-and-go bangs hang limply down her forehead like rain-battered weeds, and she doesn't appear to be using much in the way of hair spray, mousse, or even makeup."

Jay Leno said on his nightly show that Clinton "stopped wearing makeup and nail polish. She stopped having her hair done. She's also wearing less fashionable clothes. Isn't she worried her husband might lose interest?"



## ABORTION IS A WOMAN'S RIGHT

Pat Grogan and others

Why abortion rights are central to the fight for the full emancipation of women. \$3.00

FROM PATHFINDER

Available from bookstores listed on page 12



# Judges sentence man for killing disabled girl

BY JOE YOUNG

VANCOUVER, British Columbia—On January 18 the Supreme Court of Canada ruled 7-0 that Robert Latimer, a 47-year-old farmer from Saskatchewan, must serve at least 10 years in prison for killing his severely disabled daughter Tracy. The decision has opened a public debate across Canada.

The court's reinstatement of the mandatory 10-year sentence has been supported by groups who speak for the disabled. Others are opposing the sentence as too harsh. Supporters of Latimer held a demonstration January 24 outside the Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, correctional center to demand clemency. "The people are asking the justice minister to intervene and reduce the sentence for Robert and that he serve a sentence at home on his farm," said

## AS I SEE IT

Bill Risling, an organizer of the protest.

Latimer's desperate action and Tracy's death underline once again how, for working people in capitalist society, caring for the young, the disabled, and the elderly is thrust on the individual family with little or no assistance from the state.

This case underlines the urgent need for the unions and the entire labor movement to organize a fight to make health care a right available to all and financed by the state. Otherwise working people will continue to have to make daily life-and-death decisions about themselves, family members, and other loved ones based on their ability to continue to provide care and needed medication. Only when a health care system is run in the interests of working people can humane decisions, free from financial and individual pressures, be made about how long to prolong the life of terminally ill patients.

On Oct. 24, 1993, Latimer placed Tracy, 12, in his truck and fed exhaust fumes into it. Tracy suffered from a severe form of cerebral palsy and was in continual pain. Her right hip was dislocating frequently. She was due for an operation to remove her hip. She had already had several operations and had up to six epileptic fits a day. She

had the mental age of a four-year-old and required constant attention by her parents.

Latimer responded angrily to a previous decision to sentence him to a life sentence. The continuation of medical treatment of Tracy, he said, was the "promotion of torture, mutilation, [and] force-feeding, just so that some poor little child can survive a few more days and endure that much more torture. It's illogical."

Latimer was first tried in 1994. His conviction for second-degree murder was thrown out after it was revealed that the prosecution had interfered with the jury selection. He was again found guilty in 1997. The judge, under pressure from the jury, invoked a little-used clause and sentenced Latimer to a one-year jail term and one year of house arrest instead of the mandatory 10 years in prison. The case was appealed up to the Supreme Court, which reimposed the 10-year sentence. Mandatory sentencing is part of the "law and order" campaign by the wealthy rulers of Canada.

The Supreme Court judges cited three reasons in rejecting Latimer's defense. They said that Tracy was not in imminent peril or at the point of dying and that Latimer had a reasonable legal alternative. "He could have struggled on," the ruling said. The court also ruled that the harm inflicted was disproportionate to the harm avoided.

The Supreme Court justices said nothing of the situation of children and of health care in Canada. If they had, they would have had to point out that one in five children live in poverty. Infant mortality is twice as high among native people as in the population as a whole. And that the cutting of \$36 billion in payments from the federal government to the provinces has led to a serious deterioration in the quality of health care.

Commenting on the lack of adequate care for those in pain, Dr. Réjean Thomas told the Montreal daily *La Presse*, "The only response we get generally is that remedial care is there for reducing suffering. But what is less well known is that only 10 percent of those sick really have access to remedial care." The Supreme Court justices were also silent on the lack of services available to parents who have handicapped children. An article in the January 20 *Globe and Mail*, subtitled "Parents of disabled children say they must battle aggressively to get support they need," cited the example of Gwen Caudle from Mississauga, Ontario,

who had a severely disabled 10-year-old daughter. "There was no financial help, or any residential care available in her community," the article said. "So last year Ms. Caude gave up custody of Julie to the Children's Aid Society, which placed her in a group home."

According to the article, the Toronto Association for Community Living, which provides about two-thirds of the city's services for the disabled, has group home beds for 280 adults. Some 900 families are on the waiting list.

Groups that claim to speak for the disabled supported the Supreme Court decision. Jim Derksen, chairman of the human rights committee of the Winnipeg-based Council of Canadians with Disabilities, said, "It is a comfort to know that we are citizens as others and that the law will protect us." One of Canada's two national papers, *The Globe and Mail*, stated in an editorial, "To excuse or diminish Mr. Latimer's offence because he had been a caring father in heartbreaking circumstances would send a signal to other care givers for severely disabled children or adults that, if they took upon themselves the role of executioner, society would see their murders as somehow worthier and more understandable than most killings."

Travis Pohl, a co-worker of mine, said of the court's judgment, "I think it was harsh. He shouldn't serve any time. I think he thought he had no alternative. He couldn't stand to see his daughter in pain. He had no where else to turn. He didn't want to do it but he thought it was necessary."

I have been pointing out the need for workers and farmers to fight for the state to provide such services today and to replace the current capitalist government with one of our own. Such a government would put human needs, including the care and rights of disabled people, as its starting point. Explaining the advances working people have made in Cuba as a result of a successful revolutionary struggle to overturn capitalism and chart a course toward building socialism has been useful as well. In Cuba, where human solidarity is the cornerstone of all social relations, health care is available to all at no charge. It is unthinkable in Cuba that any working person would have to face a situation like that forced on the Latimer family.

Joe Young is a production worker in a meatpacking plant in Vancouver.

# Mississippi town fights water supply contamination

Continued from Page 16

payments without going through years of waiting or being denied."

## USWA strike at Titan Tire

The McSwain activists were interested in learning about the Steelworkers' strike at Titan Tire in Natchez, where USWA Local 303L has been fighting to win a decent contract and beat back the company's union-busting efforts since September 1998.

"How do you survive?" they asked. Evans and White said strikers have received solidarity and support and have gotten jobs to make ends meet while they continue picketing. Evans and White suggested that the activists try to enlist support from whatever unions may exist in the Richton area, explaining how they could be of help. They also sug-

gested talking to the white residents who live near the community. "We listen to what the whites in our area say," Powell agreed. "This affects them too."

"I believe in justice," said Powell, who is proud of being born in Birmingham, Alabama, where some of the most important civil rights battles were fought. "I have those roots in the civil rights movement. Normally, you would not find a community like ours getting as far as we have. We have found that persistence is the key."

Susan LaMont is a member of the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees. Rachael Van Riper is a member of the Young Socialists. USWA Local 303L members Willie Evans and James White contributed to this article.



Militant/David Wulp

Residents of McSwain, Mississippi, who are active in the fight to uncover the truth about high rates of illnesses in the community.

## LETTERS

### Ashcroft's nomination

I am so pleased to see that the *Militant* website is now in such good order, so well thought out in terms of access to articles, past, present, and even future!

I enjoyed the article by Greg McCartan commenting on the Ashcroft nomination. They were right on the mark. It will perhaps be a moot point by the time the *Militant* next has an opportunity to comment on the matter, as I imagine that the once the Democrats have had a week or so to put up a good show and score their factional points then Ashcroft will be confirmed and business as usual will proceed.

I remember living in Charleston, West Virginia, and participating in demonstrations against the nomination of Robert Bork. It does not seem that either popular or working-class opposition to Ashcroft is as forceful as it was to Bork. However, I believe that there have been some public demonstrations in spots calling for a rejection of his nomination.

Your article and editorial provide an excellent foundation for discussion as regards the nature of the process now taking place in bourgeois politics. Any person seeking

a working-class footing on these matters must distance themselves completely from the interests and logic of Senators Schumer, Feinstein, and company and the "write-a-letter-to-your-senator" mind-set of middle class opposition. However, it seems to me that a defeat of the Ashcroft nomination, if it were brought about by a broad popular opposition, would present a significant setback to the Bush administration's, and the now-so-nakedly bipartisan Congress' and Senate's visibly escalated agenda for attacking the social rights of working people.

Ben Fiering  
Peekskill, New York

### Inmate slave labor

I really have grown to love the *Militant* and its accurate and honest reporting of the kinds of things that the big-business press doesn't want us to know.

Of course, being an inmate, I would like to see more on the prison situation, but I also understand that you have to concentrate on matters affecting those who are still working in the free world. I am presently gathering information in the hope of writing a lengthy piece on the possibility (or probability) of the

government (various state and federal agencies) and big business using inmate slave labor to break the unions.

It will take very little "adjustment" to existing laws to allow full operation of for-profit industries within prison walls. If these facilities are built with an eye toward retooling, the possibility exists that the 2 million prison inmates now incarcerated could be forced to act as an army of scabs. This, used against one union at a time, could eventually shut down every American union.

I hope all of you are well and that your chins are up in the fight for revolution. Keep up the great work! A prisoner  
Morgan, Georgia

### Book on Geronimo Pratt

On June 10, 1997, Geronimo Pratt was released from prison after serving 27 years for a crime he didn't commit. Jack Olsen's book *Last Man Standing—The Tragedy and Triumph of Geronimo Pratt*, is an excellently written account of Pratt's life story; why he became a leader of the Black Panther Party; how the government framed him up on murder charges; and the determined movement which effectively

forced a judge to grant his freedom.

One aspect to this story that Olsen has written about quite effectively is the determination and endurance of Geronimo Pratt. For this reason alone, *Last Man Standing—The Tragedy and Triumph of Geronimo Pratt* by Jack Olsen is well worth reading.

Steve Halpern  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

### Britain's firepower

In *Militant* issue no. 5, Phil Waterhouse did a good job filling readers in on what British imperialism is up to in Sierra Leone. His report would have been even better if he had checked out the U.S. Naval Institute's *Guide to Combat Fleets of the World*, or *Jane's Fighting Ships* before he wrote the article.

He describes HMS *Iron Duke* as a "gunboat." In reality, the ship is Type 23-class general purpose guided missile frigate launched in 1991. Weighing in at 4,200 tons (full load), the *Iron Duke* is almost the size of an average destroyer. The ship is equipped with two guided missile systems (Harpoon surface-to-surface and Sea Wolves) and can fly a Sea Lynx combat helicopter from her deck. Certain neighbor-

hoods in Freetown might be nervous about her rapid fire, 114 mm Vicker's dual-purpose cannon.

Kurt Hill  
Brooklyn, New York

### Bush's hypocrisy

Bush claims his "No. 1 priority" is education. Yet he devotes far fewer resources to this than to tax relief for the wealthiest 1 percent of Americans. He plans new school spending of \$10 billion, while the estate tax cut will cost \$36 billion.

Bush has said that charity is the best way to help the poor, however, by cutting the estate taxes of the richest Americans he will eliminate the single largest incentive for charitable donation. Nearly half of this tax cut will benefit only 2,400 families—each to an average of \$6.2 million.

Howard Skipper  
Eugene, Oregon

The letters column is an open forum for all viewpoints on subjects of interest to working people.

Please keep your letters brief. Where necessary they will be abridged. Please indicate if you prefer that your initials be used rather than your full name.

## Pickets on the waterfront oppose union-busting drive in New Zealand

BY ANNALUCIA VERMUNT

NELSON, New Zealand—Up to 250 waterfront workers and supporters picketed here January 23–25 when the ship *Eastern Forest* berthed at the Port of Nelson to take on a load of logs. This was the largest action to date in a three-month fight by members of the Waterfront Workers Union to defend union jobs and conditions on the wharves.

Workers from several other South Island ports joined the picket line, as well as six members of the Maritime Union of Australia and a representative of the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union of Australia.

The timber company Carter Holt Harvey (CHH) has contracted an antiunion outfit, Mainland Stevedoring, to load its logs at South Island ports. It claims the stevedoring company uses “innovative techniques” that are “more efficient.”

Mainland has flown staff in from Tauranga, in the North Island, to load the ships. These workers are not members of the Waterfront Workers Union. Recently Mainland formed its own company union, the Amalgamated Stevedores Union, in an attempt to paint the dispute as an “inter-union conflict.”

Workers interviewed on the picket line here January 24 explained the threat to jobs and conditions of work these moves represent. Mainland uses three or four fewer people to load a ship and does not use a “hatchman” to coordinate work on the vessel and ensure workers are safe. Logs are one of the most dangerous cargoes to load, they explained. Carter Holt’s use of Mainland also means a loss of existing work and the increasing conversion of jobs on the wharves from permanent to casual.

Charles, a casual laborer with the local Stevedoring Services (Nelson), said he had been working six days a month, “but this will affect me an average of two days a month, so that is a big cut. I’ve been casual for 11 years and still haven’t been offered permanent part-time work,” he said. “The waterfront has changed heaps in the last 11 years. We never used to work 24 hours, now we do and we get nothing extra for it.”

Another worker, Phil Cornwall, told the January 27 *New Zealand Herald*, “If CHH get what they want, and that seems to be total casualisation, they put pressure on our company. What they are doing is driving down our wages and conditions. They could dump me easily and it wouldn’t cost them a thing.”

Many of the ports involved are in depressed provincial areas. Ray Fife, secretary of the Waterfront Workers Union in Bluff, located on the southern tip of the South Island, told the *Southland Times*, “The commercial reality is by getting Mainland, there could be no permanent [waterside] jobs in Bluff.”

In Nelson, up to 50 police escorted the nonunion workers through the picket line at each shift change. Using a “flying wedge,” they surrounded the truck carrying the Mainland staff, pushing protesting waterfront workers aside. At one point police attempted to provoke protesters by sending a “wedge” right into the picket to arrest a man they claimed had assaulted a cop. Even though the union has maintained an approach of organizing peaceful and disciplined protests, police arrested four pickets over three days. Cops have also sought to slander the union pickets as being violent, claiming drunkenness on the picket line. Workers on the picket line said no one involved in pickets over January 23–25 had been drinking.

As the dispute has become an increasingly important issue in politics here, the New Zealand government has sought to push the parties into mediation. Margaret Wilson, the minister of labour, told National

Radio, “You balance that right that people have, who are trying to protect their jobs—and their communities are supporting them as I understand it—with the employer’s right to be able to use whatever stevedore they like at a price they think is suitable. There are two equal competing rights here.”

The *Press*, the largest South Island daily newspaper, pointed out in a January 26 editorial that this “is the first major industrial conflict since the new Employment Relations Act” was passed last year. The *Press* welcomed reports that “the dispute is heading towards mediation.”

A January 27 editorial in the Auckland-based *New Zealand Herald*, on the other hand, dismissed the usefulness of mediation in the dispute. Instead it urged the government “to stand up and provide leadership” on the side of the antiunion forces.

The Waterfront Workers Union has agreed to enter mediation with Mainland Stevedoring and CHH, but the union’s national secretary said the union would continue protests during the talks. About 80 members of the Waterfront Workers and supporters joined a picket at Bluff January 29, where the ship the *Century Forest* arrived to be loaded with logs for Carter Holt Harvey.

Annalucia Vermunt is a member of the Meat Workers Union in Christchurch.



Waterfront workers picket in defense of their jobs and union on January 24

Militant/Annalucia Vermunt

## Working people in small Mississippi town fight gov’t cover-up of water contamination

BY SUSAN LAMONT AND RACHAEL VAN RIPER

McSWAIN, Mississippi—Working people in this small Black community, located in the southeastern corner of the state, are fighting to find out the truth behind the epidemic of serious health problems that has plagued residents here for years.

On December 30, nine community activists met with *Militant* reporters to tell their story. Gathered at the home of Wilma McSwain, the group included hospital workers, sewing machine operators, a cook, a construction worker, and a teacher. Several of them are unable to work now due to illness. Joining the reporting team were Willie Evans and James White, two members of United Steelworkers of America (USWA) Local 303L, on strike against Titan Tire in Natchez, Mississippi, who were interested in learning more about this embattled community’s fight.

“In April of last year, we began to really notice the number of deaths and sickness in our community,” explained Yvonne Powell, 42, a former hospital worker and a leader of the community’s efforts. Her determination to get to the bottom of the situation in McSwain and her refusal to be discouraged by the government’s response—indifferent at best and hostile at worst, she says—is helping get the community’s fight more widely known.

“We started to look around at the industry in the area and to ask what was the common factor? What could be affecting all of us? We finally started to look at the water in the community and ask, could the water be the source of our health problems?” Powell continued.

McSwain residents contacted the Mississippi State Department of Health in Hattiesburg and asked for a report on the water in their area. They were sent a 1993 report that showed a high level of arsenic in the water, triple the maximum contaminant level.

Many residents report having a range of symptoms consistent with arsenic poisoning, including irritable bowel syndrome and other intestinal disorders, vision and nerve prob-

lems, joint disorders, and the appearance of a particular form of wart and other skin problems. Meanwhile, the state health department says the figure in the 1993 report was a typographical error. The Mississippi State Department of Environmental Quality tested McSwain’s water in June 2000 and report they found no contamination.

In the last year and a half, 10 McSwain residents have died, about half from various forms of cancer, explained Natalie Leverette, a teacher. An informal survey conducted by the activists shows virtually every household in this community of 300 is affected by serious disease, from babies born with birth defects to a high rate of multiple myeloma, a rare form of cancer.

In August 2000, residents got together and formed People Effective Against Chemical Eugenics (PEACE) in order to pursue their fight. “We chose the word eugenics because we learned that that means a way to eliminate or sterilize ‘unwanted’ people,” Natalie Leverette said.

Until 1974, McSwain residents got their water from private wells, Powell said. That year, they began using water from a well in Richton, the nearest town. The well had been previously used by Richton residents, who began using a different one in 1969. The two wells draw water from different aquifers. Richton residents, using the new well, do not have the same type and level of health problems that are plaguing the McSwain community, Powell explained.

Powell, with community backing, went to the University of Southern Mississippi in Hattiesburg to try to find out more about what could have happened to their water supply. She found a report by a U.S. Department of the Interior Geological Survey hydrologist that found high levels of strontium, manganese, and boron in their water. Residents believe that nearby wood treatment plants, including Georgia Pacific, and oil wells in the area are responsible for the contamination. “They have all dumped their waste products and chemicals into the streams in our area,” Powell said.

Powell and Mildred Moody, who used to work as a cook and a sewing machine op-

erator until she became disabled by illness, took the *Militant* team to see one of the creeks in the area. The water was yellow and foaming and several animal carcasses had washed up on the side of the stream.

In addition to contacting various state agencies to try to get to the bottom of what was going on, community residents tried to get some help and information from the Richton city government. Instead of help, local officials have tried to dismiss McSwain residents’ concerns as unfounded.

After hearing about the difficulties faced by community residents in getting at the truth about what is happening, Willie Evans, one of the visiting Titan Tire strikers, asked about the overall conditions facing the McSwain community. “It sounds like conditions of segregation are still in effect in the area,” he said. “Is that right?”

“Yes,” several activists responded. There are no Blacks in city government in Richton, working in the local hospital, or serving as clerks in the stores. Only recently did one of the banks hire two Black tellers, activists said. At the August 2000 Richton town meeting, attended by local congressman Gene Taylor, the officials would not recognize any McSwain residents. “There’s no need to waste taxpayers’ money on this issue,” Taylor told the crowd. He accused McSwain residents of manipulating the situation.

In response to the Richton city government’s inaction, McSwain residents have initiated a boycott of the local pharmacy, which is owned by Mayor James White.

The well McSwain residents began using in 1974 was finally closed and cemented over in 1994. The community now draws water from another well. The community has asked for the old well to be reopened and tested by the federal Environmental Protection Agency. “We want to get a clinic where McSwain residents can have their health problems treated,” said Powell, explaining the community’s goals. “And we want McSwain to have its own water system that we can control. And for people who can no longer work to be granted disability

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